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INSPIRATION

BY THE LATE

FREDERICK WATSON, D.D.

FELLOW AND THEOLOGICAL LECTURER IN ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
VICAR OF ST. EDWARD'S, CAMBRIDGE; HON. CANON OF ELY CATHEDRAL
AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF ELY; FORMERLY
TYRWHITT AND CROSSE SCHOLAR IN THE UNIVERSITY
HULSEAN LECTURER, 1882

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FREDERICK WATSON

ON New Year's Day, 1906, Cambridge lost one of its principal teachers, and the University and Town one of their most prominent members and citizens, when Frederick Watson passed away. His life since he went up to Cambridge forty years ago had revolved round two centres, the cause of the Church of Christ in parochial work and in the teaching of Theology. By these he sought to promote the glory of God and the increase of learning and virtue with a definiteness that gave a marked consistency to a strenuous and vigorous life.

Watson was born in the city of York in 1844, and went to the Cathedral School, St. Peter's College as it is officially designated. His attention was directed principally to Mathematics, and he gained an open Exhibition at St. John's, which was exchanged next year for a Foundation Scholarship.

In his undergraduate days he lived the life of a student, making his Tripos and his religious duties the main business for which he came up.

His Tripos was that of 1868, in which he was placed twelfth. It was a year productive of notable men, no less than four of our Judges being in that Tripos : Moulton (Senior Wrangler), Buckley, Sutton, and Barnes, besides Kennedy, who was Senior Classic.

The Second Wrangler was Sir George Darwin; the present Astronomer Royal, Christie, was fourth, and the Master of Sidney third, so that it was a remarkably strong year. But Watson immediately turned to Theological studies, taking the Theological examination for Graduates which was afterwards formed into the Theological Tripos: and he won the Hulsean Prize for an Essay on the Ante-Nicene apologetics. He then secured in succession the Carus Greek Testament prize, the Crosse scholarship, and the Tyrrwhitt Hebrew scholarship, laying the foundations for a most promising academic career. In 1871 he was elected to a Fellowship. He was ordained in 1871 and served the curacy of Stow-cum-Quy, near Cambridge, where he acquired a love for the pastoral work which ever afterwards lay very near his academic interests, even if it was not actually the stronger attraction. He then took the curacy of St. Giles under Francis Slater, whose name is still honoured in Cambridge, and with him Watson had the most intimate mental and spiritual sympathies. As for efficiency, Slater said afterwards when surrounded by three or even more "half-time curates," College Fellows mostly, that the parish was never so well worked as when he and Watson alone were the staff. Money was none too plentiful, and the future had to be provided for, yet Watson's Yorkshire thriftiness did not prevent his expending a sum which came to him while curate, upon a mission room in that parish which no one else came forward to provide. As he had gone up to Cambridge from an Evangelical family a change had in some way been effected in his theological views but inquiries have failed to elicit

any personal sources of influence, and it may be presumed that the tone of Professors Jeremie, Selwyn, Swainson, and Lightfoot, which was effective in Cambridge at that time, was congenial to Watson's temper and led him quietly towards the calm and cautious churchmanship by which Cambridge has been privileged to influence a large number of English Churchmen. But Watson was never an extremist, emphatically never a "Ritualist," for as C. B. D. wrote in the *Church Times*, "he held that ritual divorced from teaching was next to useless, and therefore he used ritual as a means of teaching the Catholic Faith," and though he joined the "English Church Union" he often felt qualms about what was done by that Society, and in the end he felt obliged to leave it.

His Cambridge life was suspended in 1878 when he accepted the College living of Starston in Norfolk : but not for long, as the College required an addition to the Theological staff when the present Master vacated a Lectureship, and Mr. C. W. E. Body went to Canada, and Watson was invited to lecture without leaving Starston. For some years he spent part of the week in College, lecturing in Theology and latterly assisting Mr. Mason in Hebrew. It was an inconvenient arrangement, and he gladly accepted an invitation to be Vicar of Quy in 1887, combining this with his lectures more easily. In 1893 he was appointed by Trinity Hall to be Vicar of St. Edward's, the Church of Maurice and Harvey Goodwin, and became a resident of Cambridge altogether. On the retirement of Mr. Mason in 1904, Watson became principal College lecturer in Hebrew and in Theology, with the further title of Director of Theological Studies

in the College. In the varied occupations of these offices together with those of his parish he was employed, when after several recurrences of exhaustion and heart-trouble he had the seizure on January 1st which laid him on his study-couch and closed his earthly life.

Outside the College, high conscientiousness made his pastoral duties a real "care" to him: the preparation of sermons, frequently two for every Sunday, of addresses and lessons to classes, consumed much energy. All his sermons were prepared with scrupulous attention and delivered with emphasis, and must have drawn considerably on his mental forces. It was in consequence of this, we think we are fully justified in saying, that he was not able to devote time and thought to the laborious historical and critical studies which won favour at Cambridge, and have brought the University into its special position in theology in recent years. He was therefore never elected to a professorship, equipped though he was for studying, lecturing, and writing, with the abilities to which his University record bore witness; and his friends always desired for him the opportunity of leisure and the stimulus afforded by a University Chair. He issued an address to the electors to the Margaret Professorship on the death of Hort, but Lumby secured a wider support.

For University business he had little taste, and instead of it, he took part in such town affairs as bore closely on his duties as one of the town incumbents. In the elementary schools he was keenly interested, and held several laborious offices; and for some years he was one of the local secretaries for S.P.G., and

organized an association for missionary study and intercession. In the diocese his position was recognized by Bishop Alwyne Compton, who conferred upon him one of the honorary canonries of Ely Cathedral, and just before his death Dr. Chase had appointed him one of his Examining Chaplains.

Among his pastoral duties Watson found time—or rather made time—for an extension of his work at St. Edward's by instituting a Sunday afternoon Children's Service designed for the children of households, in all parishes, who were not in the habit of resorting to the ordinary Sunday schools. The response was very encouraging to him, and Sunday by Sunday a large number of the children of University residents and others benefited by his admirable addresses. He never spared himself in preparing them ; indeed, he had a special interest in them, and by his keen sympathy with young minds of intelligence and eagerness to learn and know, he won many friends among the boys and girls of Cambridge homes.

Another line of activity was formed by him in the very important part he played in the inception and organization of Cambridge Missions in South London. He was for over twenty years the mainstay of the Lady Margaret Mission in Walworth ; between the missionaries, the undergraduates, the people in the district, and the old members of the College he was the principal link—unwearied, hopeful, inspiring.

In his many avocations time was lacking for the production of theology, and Watson's writings do not show what he was capable of doing. They are "The Ante-Nicene Apologies" (his Hulsean Essay), 1870 ;

"Defenders of the Faith" (for an S.P.C.K. series), 1878; "The Law and the Prophets" (his Hulsean Lectures), 1882; "The Book of Genesis: a True History," 1892; and an Essay in "Lex Mosaica." But he had latterly been pondering over the subject of "Inspiration," and had written out his thoughts upon it. The Manuscript was found to be complete and it is now published practically as he left it. It indicates a very cautious and well-considered advance upon his earlier attitude towards the results of critical studies, and can hardly fail to be helpful to those, both of the clergy and the laity, who desire to reap the benefits of these studies in a conservative spirit. Certainly in all that he thought, from beginning to end, his hearers and his readers are appealed to on the ground that every doctrine must be judged by Christian men not speculatively but in relation to the manifestation of God in Christ.

In preparing the Manuscript for the Press I have been assisted by an old pupil of Dr. Watson's, the Rev. J. F. Tarleton, Rector of Great Warley, Essex; and by members of Dr. Watson's family.

A. CALDECOTT.

September 1, 1906.

INSPIRATION

I

THE PREFACE

THERE is a widespread feeling abroad that the Higher Criticism has done something towards discrediting the Bible, has deprived it of something of its authority and value, and has in a greater or less degree invalidated its claims to be considered the Inspired Word of God. There is, in consequence, a widespread desire amongst Christian people to know how the case stands. Many are fearing the loss of their Bible, or are at least anxious upon the point. Some do not hesitate to say that an investigation producing results so disturbing to faith, must be in itself indefensible. They insist that any clergyman who belongs to the critical school, or uses critical methods, is *ipso facto* unfaithful to his ordination vows. On the other hand there are some persons who exult that at length the foundations of religion have been undermined. It seems to me these feelings, whether of fear, or dislike, or of exultation, are not and cannot be justified. They rest on a misconception of Higher Criticism, the nature of the inquiries it makes, and the sphere and limits of its action. It would no doubt be

too sweeping an assertion to say that no result of Higher Criticism, however extreme, could possibly disprove the title of the Bible or any part of it, to be the Inspired Word of God. But this is certain, that the Higher Criticism has nothing to say on matters of faith, and such the Inspiration of the Bible is. The object of this book is to endeavour to do something to relieve the anxiety so widely felt, by defining the relations between Higher Criticism and Inspiration. I believe, and shall endeavour to show that the Higher Criticism is, when applied to the Bible, a legitimate method of inquiry. I am not in the least concerned to defend the results of Criticism as they are called. In the first place no general agreement as to these has been reached by competent persons. Also, in my opinion, it is a gross abuse of language to give the name of result to much which passes under that name. If any statement were put forth at the present time, it would be scouted by some scholars as ridiculously inadequate, and by others as full of unverifiable assumptions. These are often nothing more than plausible hypotheses at the best and little better than vain imaginations at the worst. Unbelief is the main element in a very large number of "critical results." Still it seems clear that important results have been arrived at, not, indeed, beyond the reach of modification, but at least furnishing a basis for further research. Now there are two fundamental principles which, I think, we, as Christian men and rational beings, must accept at the outset in any inquiry like this, viz. (1) That the Bible is the Inspired Word of God, or to put it somewhat differently, is the Inspired Record of God's

revelation to man of Himself; (2) That the form in which the Divine Revelation has come down to us is such that man not merely may but must use his reason upon it. In other words the Bible is also truly and substantially the word of man. I believe that the trouble and anxiety, the unreasoning dislike and premature exultation felt concerning the Bible by different kinds of men, all arise from the failure to hold both truths, viz. that the Bible is the Word of God, and that it is the word of man, with an equal grasp. The indications of the Bible's human character have been passed over and explained away in the supposed interests of its Divine character. Its Divine character has been denied when manifest traces of human imperfections have been discovered in it. Faith and Reason have both something to say upon the Bible. Each also has something to say which the other has no right to contradict. If one may judge from letters written to newspapers (but it is to be hoped we need not), men are finding it well-nigh impossible to deal fairly with both their reason and their faith. They seem to think that they honour the one Divine light of man by extinguishing or ignoring the other. And yet can the battle against materialism be fought and won unless Reason and Faith are allied? And can either be set aside if we wish to arrive at the full truth of God's Holy Word? It may be that, giving our reason its fair scope, we shall find ourselves obliged to abandon some cherished or traditional ideas about God's Book. To do so will probably give us pain. It is surely our wisdom to accept thankfully the pain which is a consequence of fuller light. We may trust

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ourselves to the guidance of the kindly light of God's truth. It is commonly argued that if certain startling critical results are true the Bible cannot be inspired. I am inclined to think that we shall find that some of them are true, and yet that the Bible remains God's Inspired Word—the lamp unto our feet and the guide unto our paths.

Let us begin by considering what the Higher Criticism is. The reasons will become clear, I hope, as we go on, why Higher Criticism is rightly used on the Bible; why further, if we are faithful to God, it must be so used; and why, also, fuller light is necessarily derived from its rightful use.

The Bible is a unique book, unlike all other books, transcending them all in its influence on mankind, and imparting to them a knowledge not to be obtained elsewhere on matters of supreme importance to man's happiness and life. As Christians, we acknowledge the Bible to be, beyond all question, the Word of God. It is God's making, as no other book can be said to be. It is the inspired record of the Revelation He has made to man. Whatever our attitude to criticism we agree on this. It is an article of the Church's Faith that the Holy Scriptures are inspired by God, in other words that the Holy Ghost spake by the prophets. Let me express again my belief that the Higher Criticism cannot throw doubt on these facts, and that those who attempt to do so in its name pass beyond their legitimate spheres. The whole truth about the Bible has, however, not yet been stated. The Bible is literature, and so it is a book, or rather a collection of books, like other books. It is written in two of the languages of men,

and so has to be interpreted, primarily at least, by the ordinary rules of interpretation, rules which it has been the business of the human reason to establish. It deals with history, narrative, philosophy, moral teaching and the like, and such things confessedly belong to Reason's province. We cannot, indeed, withdraw these from its cognizance, wherever they may be found. The Bible also has itself a history. We have a mass of facts partly derived from itself, and partly from other sources, bearing on its authorship, date, and composition. These things also belong to Reason's sphere. A little thought will surely convince any intelligent person that the Bible having this character, Reason cannot be warned off it. In making translations from the original, for example, rules of thought and interpretation cannot be dispensed with for the Bible, any more than for other books, and these rules are of Reason's making.

Now the Reason, *i.e.* the critical faculty in man, has been, through many generations, in God's hands for its fashioning, its development, and its sharpening. We of this age are the inheritors of the wisdom of all the preceding ages. The stores of their knowledge are in our possession. We profit alike by their discoveries and their mistakes. Man has, therefore, become better able than in any preceding age to discern not only between the true and the false; but also to discern minute differences of all kinds in thought and language and expression. The claim is not made that the greatest intellects of our own day are more powerful than those found in past ages. This is probably not the case. But these are days of free communication. Combined study is not only a

possibility but a fact. There is universal free trade in the products of knowledge. The discoveries and even the suggestions of one scholar become immediately the possession of all. A concentration of reasoning power has thus become possible, and it has been made. Also, in our age, by the Providence of God, new facts bearing on the Bible have been brought to light. Travellers have explored the ruins of ancient civilizations, and have found in them records of the cities and nations to which the Bible refers. These records are specially valuable, because they are more ancient by hundreds and thousands of years than anything to be found in the Bible in its present form. The books of the Bible can no longer be regarded as the most ancient extant books of mankind, and thus the literary problems they present are essentially changed in character. The Higher Criticism is nothing but the application of the highly developed human reason to the mass of facts, old and new, which bear upon the outward form of the Bible. Since Reason is a lamp which God Himself has lit in man, developed reason gives brighter, and combined reason fuller light to man. The discovery, also, of every new fact in regard to Bible times, or lands, or nations, is an addition to our knowledge of the Bible. Such being the case, it is impossible to deny that Higher Criticism, properly used, illustrates and throws light upon the Holy Scriptures ; not, indeed, primarily upon the spiritual truths contained in them, but upon their outward form, the interpretation of their history, archæology, manners, and customs. The opponents of Higher Criticism should ask themselves, "Can we eschew the new

knowledge of ancient times that God in His goodness has given us? Can we rightly object to use our reason upon it?" If these questions can have but one answer, let us remember that it is an invariable rule that fuller light changes our opinions of things. With new light come new interpretations, and the abandonment of old. When we call in our own reason to our aid, we must deal fairly with it. When it speaks in its own sphere, it claims our attention and assent.

But it will be said, the Higher Criticism does not, as a matter of fact, give a clearer perception of truth. It destroys men's faith. It declares the miraculous to be the incredible. It throws doubt on all the articles of the Christian faith. It would be more accurate to say, however, that some higher critics do all these things. Higher Criticism does not, and cannot; if it does, it ceases to be Higher Criticism. Here comes in the distinction already made between Higher Criticism, considered as a method, and the results arrived at under its name. The one must be accepted, if we are reasoning beings, the other may be utterly unreasonable. Higher critics are not infallible, nor are they always right reasoners. As there were prophets who prophesied out of their own hearts, there are critics who criticize out of their own minds or imaginations; or, it may be, they start with unbelieving hypotheses, and are consequently unable to come to the full knowledge of the truth. Critical results of all kinds, reasonable and unreasonable, come promiscuously before the public, and the public is incompetent to discriminate between them. It is not impossible that the most extreme results,

because of their revolutionary character, are the most popular. Thus criticism gets a bad name. We must, none the less, hold by the maxim, "the abuse of a thing does not take away its lawful use." The right use of reason must not be abjured because some reasoners are unreasonable and unbelievers.

I have already said that in this inquiry the Inspiration of the Bible will be assumed throughout. Proofs or indications of its inspiration will be given— aids to faith, one might call them ; but we start from the standpoint of faith. Perhaps some will be ready to say this vitiates the inquiry *ab initio*. Instead of regarding the Bible as an inspired book, we should regard it with neutral eyes, even as we should regard a recently discovered book lost for centuries. It seems to me impossible for any Christian to assume this mental attitude. To dissever himself from his Bible is to cut himself in twain. The Bible is part of himself, his better self. It has moulded his thoughts, his desires, his ideals. It has given to him his hopes. It has formed his life. It has nourished his spiritual being. He himself would be a different person, had he never known and valued his Bible. All who are Christians must needs approach the Bible from the position of belief in it—belief, that is to say, that God has spoken to them, and continually speaks to them through it. It is in possession, so to speak ; it has our hearts and minds in possession. We are not unprejudiced investigators, we fully admit ; neither, indeed, are unbelievers. If we assume the truth of Revelation, they assume its falsehood. We should have to go to another planet to find unprejudiced judges of the Bible.

And we Christians claim that we have good grounds for our prejudice. We base our belief on our own personal experience. And our experience is not individual and abnormal. The Bible has been a prime factor for centuries in the development of the higher life of mankind. It might be said of it, as of the river of Ezekiel's vision, that wherever it goes it brings life. It has not only ennobled the ideals of men and nations, it has raised their practical standards of conduct. It has made some vices, once common, impossible ; it would, if it had been followed, have abolished many more. It has brought new duties within the sight and practice of ordinary men. In view of these facts, it would be thoroughly unscientific to regard the Bible as if it were a recently discovered book, apart from its beneficent history. To do so would be to ignore facts.

It may be confidently asserted that we have the same reason for regarding the Bible as spiritual food, that ordinary men have for regarding bread as bodily food. No analysis could shake our belief in the nourishing properties of bread. Should some higher critic, *i.e.* some scientific expert, contradict universal experience, his statement would be disregarded. Similarly, no higher criticism should have any power to shake our belief in the nourishing properties of the Bible. The scientific analyst could tell us perhaps, how a loaf was put together, he might be able to prove that it was not entirely free from adulteration, he might show that different kinds of materials were combined in it ; he might be able to demonstrate very clearly that it had not been made as we supposed, with the highest skill. He could further

prove to us that the different elements of bread were not all alike nourishing. His analysis might be very useful up to a certain point, but we should wait for it without anxiety, and accept it without panic, being sure that, in spite of any imperfections, bread is the staff of our life. The analogy between bread and the Bible, between the analyst and the higher critic, is very close. There is only one distinction of importance, and it is this. There are innumerable loaves of bread of which men eat, and these are not identical in character. A particular loaf may conceivably be so adulterated as to be positively noxious. On the other hand, the Bible, which nourishes our souls, and which is tested by the analyst is one and the same. He analyses that which we have eaten. The Bible, however, is essentially food, and the higher critic essentially an analyst—and an analyst of the Bible. By analysing it he can give us much information of a certain value as to its origin, its growth, its substance and composition. He may make it clear that the loaf of the Bible, or if we may so say, the loaves of its different books, were not composed in an ideal way, and are not all equally nourishing. As has been pointed out, practical efficacy, and not ideal perfection, is wont to be God's way of dealing with us His creatures. But nothing that the critic may say can alter our conviction that the Bible is bread, *i.e.* good nourishing food, and the bread of God—food nourishing the Divine element in our being. If he says anything to the contrary—and sometimes, no doubt, he passes beyond his province and does say something—we may laugh him to scorn, for we know he is wrong, and our own

experience is also the experience of countless millions of our fellowmen.

There seems, then, to be sufficient provisional justification for the two principles on which we base our inquiry. We have good reason to believe the Bible is inspired ; and it must be right to give our reason fair play. As we inquire we must be always bearing in mind that we are not competent judges of the methods of God's workings. We know what God's will for us is, but we do not know how God will accomplish that will. We must take up the same position in regard to God's written word, which Bishop Butler took in regard to God's moral government of the world, and the whole Christian religion. Christianity is a scheme beyond our comprehension, and so, necessarily, are the ways and means God uses for revealing to us Divine truths. Everywhere, indeed, whether in nature or in grace, we find that things which seem foolish to us are the means employed by God for carrying out His great purposes ;

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform :"

and incomparably the greatest of all His wonders of which we have knowledge is His revelation of Himself to us. How He reveals Himself we cannot fully know ; faith believes, nor questions how.

It is well to remember that the Church has never defined the doctrine of Inspiration. We are taught to believe in the Holy Ghost who spake by the prophets. The mode, the extent, the degree, the exact effects of His Inspiration, the Church has never defined. We may thank God for it. A

definition of an uncritical age might have been difficult to reconcile with the conclusions of developed reason and fuller knowledge. Again, as English Churchmen, we are left free in this matter. The sixth of the XXXIX Articles declares that Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, and that it is of supreme authority in matters of faith but it does not define Inspiration. And it is noteworthy that the Article does not rest the authority of the Holy Scriptures on their inspiration, but on their canonicity. The word "Inspiration," in its technical sense, does not, I believe, occur in the Articles or other formularies of the English Church. It will be remembered that assent is not asked from the lay-members of the Church to the Articles or Prayer-book. No one in our day will be likely to identify the XXXIX Articles with those articles of the Christian Faith which all Christians are bound to believe. Deacons at their ordination profess that they unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. To believe the Scriptures is to believe that they are the inspired Word of God.

We cannot, if we are intelligent students of God's Holy Word, escape from critical investigations, nor can we keep ourselves in ignorance of critical discoveries. It sounds plausible to say that there is something of profanity and ingratitude for creatures to criticize gifts given them in the infinite goodness and mercy of God. But God's good gifts are good to us only when they are rightly used, and unless we criticize them, we shall never know how to use them aright. We must give the word "criticize" a suitable

meaning. To criticize the Divine Revelation is not to justify or condemn it, far less is it to carp at it in a superior kind of way, or to point out its deficiencies. It is simply to ascertain as far as possible its external character, and to bring it within our intellectual grasp. Our holy Religion has countless points of contact with the world in which we live. We cannot withdraw it from Reason's criticisms at any of them. To do so is to admit that our faith is irrational. If Reason has nothing to do with Revelation, Revelation, in her turn, can have nothing to do with Reason. In that case, Christ's salvation does not embrace the whole man, for it has nothing to do with the human mind.

II

INSPIRATION, WHAT IT IS—DIFFERENT KINDS OF INSPIRATION—USE OF THE WORD IN HOLY SCRIPTURE—DISTINCTION BETWEEN REVE- LATION, INSPIRATION, AND THE BIBLE

WHAT is the fundamental idea of Inspiration? We shall have no difficulty in answering this question. Its etymology tells us that inspiration is inbreathing, giving of breath. Now breath is that which distinguishes between the living and the dead. All in whose nostrils is the breath of life, whether man or cattle, or fowl or creeping thing, live. When, however, their breath is taken away they die, and are turned again to their dust. Again, breath is the gift of God. Inspiration is a Divine operation. “The Spirit of God hath made me,” says Job, “and the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.”* In God’s hand is the breath of all. It is the characteristic of the true God of Israel, as compared with the false gods of the heathen, that whilst He gives life and breath and all things, they have no breath within them. Nothing can show more clearly the intimate connection between God and breath, than that one and the same word in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin is used for the Spirit of God the Giver of life and for the spirit

* Job xxxiii. 4; Job xii. 10.

of life in man. Life is, according to the teaching of Revelation, even in its lowest form, essentially Divine. To inspire is to confer something of the Divine character. It is the giving of Divine life to something which without it would be comparatively or absolutely lifeless. The difference between that which is inspired and that which is destitute of inspiration is in some sense the difference between the living and the dead. But there are diversities of life, and so diversities of inspiration ; there are degrees of life, and so degrees of inspiration. Inspiration is the putting of life into something of the nature of a body. The bodies into which the Divine life is breathed condition its character and extent. Lifeless matter being inspired becomes a living creature. "When Thou lettest Thy breath go forth, they shall be made," says the Psalmist. Bodily life is the lowest kind of life ; but even in it there are many degrees. A higher inspiration makes a higher kind of life. The breath of life breathed by God into man's nostrils makes intelligent and spiritual men—beings who are in God's image and after God's likeness. This must mean that all men are inspired ; while some men, having received a higher inspiration, are in a fuller sense Divine. But we must also distinguish amongst men in regard to their inspiration. Man in his natural state has not, in the higher sense, the Spirit of God ; he is not filled with the Divine life as he is destined to be. His spiritual being has to be enlarged and developed, redeemed, regenerated—in a word, inspired by new infusions of the Divine breath. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him to make him a nobler man, stronger, wiser, holier—in a word, to make him more

Godlike ; for Strength, Wisdom, and Holiness are Divine attributes. In this sense, the promise has been made, and also fulfilled, "I will pour forth My Spirit upon all flesh." For Inspiration of this kind we are taught to pray, "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, and cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit." And over and above these general gifts there are special gifts granted only to the few. All have been made to drink of one Spirit, but only some are apostles and prophets ; only some receive the Spirit for the various offices and ministries of the Church of God. The *Veni Creator* has its special as well as its ordinary uses. Lastly, and to be distinguished from all other uses of the word, there is the technical sense in which it is applied to the Holy Scripture and its different human authors. Holy Scripture, being inspired, is the Word of God, and is profitable for the building up and perfecting of the spiritual life of Christians in all generations. The sacred writers, being inspired, speak as they are moved of the Holy Ghost. The Church has many doctors, and all are inspired, but the sacred writers are its doctors *par excellence*, and speak with an authority which no others can claim.

Thus we see that as there are many and different forms of life, there are many and divers kinds of inspiration. It is well for us at times to distinguish between the different forms of life, but it is well for us also never to forget that life is one—one in its source and nature —because life is essentially Divine. There is, beyond all doubt, more of life and more of God in one thing than in another ; or putting it somewhat differently, the vessel in which the Divine life is contained

determines its limits and character and intensity. But there is a kinship between all living creatures. Have we not all one Father? The kinship is, in part, a kinship of material; *i.e.* all creatures are made of the same material, but ours is a kinship rather of spirit than of matter. We are joint partakers of the one Divine life. It would seem, therefore, not to be wise for us to make a great gulf of separation between the Bible and other noble books by saying that it is inspired whilst they are not. The Bible differs from all other books in the character and degree of its Inspiration. It is the supreme manifestation of Divine inspiration embodied in human words. Just as all the members of the human body are partakers of one life, though they possess it in varying degrees, and manifest in different activities, some less and some more honourable, so the whole creation is a vast embodiment of Divine life, being permeated throughout by the Spirit of God, yet not in the same manner or for the same objects. Again, we should remember that as by the Divine Inspiration a beginning of life is made, so by the same Inspiration life reaches its goal. God is our Omega as well as our Alpha. That this purpose of God might not be frustrated—that life might attain to The Life—those inspirations which are characteristic of the New Creation were given. There came to us men in the fulness of time One who is The Life, that we might have life more abundantly. There has been breathed into us One who is the Spirit of Life. Inspiration may thus be described as that Divine gift by which all things have their beginning, and also attain their end. Thus, though it is of infinite variety in its outward manifestation, its purpose, as well as

its origin and characteristic, is always the same, viz. that creation, and man in particular, may be filled with all the fulness of God.

We do not derive much information in regard to the meaning of Inspiration from the actual use of the word in the Bible. It occurs only three times in the Authorized Version, and twice in the Revised. But the three occurrences are interesting, because they refer to three different kinds of Inspiration, viz., the Inspiration of the body, the mind, and the spirit of man.

The book of Wisdom speaks of the Divine breathing of the soul into man's body. The idol-maker, it says, is vile, inasmuch as he knows not his Maker and Him that inspired into him an active soul. The Greek for "inspired" is *ἐμπνεύσαντα* and the Vulgate *inspiravit*.

The book of Job speaks of the Inspiration of the mind : * "There is a spirit in man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding" (A.V.). The R.V. with greater literality changes "Inspiration" into "breath." The LXX. version has *πνοὴ*, but the Vulgate *inspiratio*. Whatever the translation, the thought of inspiration and of the inspiration of the human mind is contained in the passage.

The third passage is by far the most important because it speaks of Inspiration, and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and also of the spirit of man.† Every Scripture inspired of God, says St. Paul, is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished

* Job xxxii. 8.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16.

completely, unto every good work. The Greek here is πᾶσα γραφὴ . . . Θεόπνευστος, and the Vulgate, *Omnis Scriptura Divinitus inspirata*. There are, it is needless to say, numerous passages in which Holy Scripture claims implicitly Inspiration for itself, but this is the only one in which Inspiration is ascribed to it in express terms. It is the passage from which, through the Vulgate, Inspiration has become a technical theological term. It is to be noted that St. Paul is here speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures only. The New Testament writings were not placed on a level with the Old till nearly the end of the second century. Translating as in R.V. and with most modern and many ancient authorities, we see that this passage is not an assertion of the Inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, but is a statement concerning the effects of Inspiration—the practical spiritual value given by it to Holy Scripture. We might say that the passage teaches that Holy Scripture inspires the souls of men so that they go on to their perfection and are able to bring forth the fruits of good works. The words of our Lord, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life," convey a similar meaning. The Scriptures are a means of communicating Divine and spiritual life. It is to be noted that the effects of Inspiration, as described here, are purely and exclusively spiritual and practical. It is not said that Scripture, because of its Divine Inspiration, becomes profitable for the teaching of any of the different subjects of human knowledge. Nor again is Holy Scripture described as perfect and infallible in itself. It has been wisely said that God's methods are characterized by "practical

efficiency" and not "ideal perfection." It is "practical efficiency" which is claimed for Holy Scripture here. It is important to distinguish clearly between Revelation, Inspiration, and the Bible; though closely connected and commonly confused one with the other, they are three different things. Inspiration is the link or medium between the other two, for it is the Divine power within man which enables him first to appreciate the Divine self-manifestation, and afterwards to place it on permanent record. Revelation is the removal of the veil which hides Divine things from man's eyes, it is God's manifestation of Himself to man. The Bible is at once the work of Inspiration and the written record of Revelation. It is a product of the one and a chronicle of the other. Bishop Westcott, in his "Introduction to the Study of the Gospels,"* thus admirably distinguishes between Inspiration and Revelation: "Inspiration may be regarded in one aspect as the correlative of Revelation. Both operations imply a supernatural extension of the field of man's spiritual vision, but in different ways. By Inspiration we conceive that his natural powers are quickened so that he contemplates with a divine intuition the truth as it exists still among the ruins of the moral and physical worlds. By Revelation we see as it were the dark veil removed from the face of things, so that the true springs and issues of life stand disclosed in their eternal nature."

We see then that Inspiration and Revelation are both equally Divine powers working for man's spiritual and highest good, filling him with that

* Page 8.

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knowledge of God which is Life Eternal. The one works within man and the other outside him; the one gives him the power of spiritual sight, the other provides spiritual objects for his spiritual vision; and so he is filled with an inner light by which He is able to see Him who is the Light of the World. In the light of Inspiration, we see the light of Revelation. As Mr. Thomson expresses it, "In this act of Revelation, God unveils that which He desires men to know; in His act of Inspiration, He opens the eyes of men's minds to see that which He has unveiled."* It is a fact worthy of special attention that in Holy Scripture the work of Inspiration is assigned to the Spirit of God, whereas the Word or Son of God is the revealer of God to man. St. John says, "The Only Begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him;" and "He (the Spirit) shall take of Mine and shall shew it unto you." The Spiritual World is revealed, and, what is far more, opened wide to man by the Son. Man's power to enter in, enjoy it, and, in some degree, comprehend it, is conferred upon him by the Spirit. It is consonant with this that the Son of God has gone to prepare a place for redeemed man. Man's new home must needs, like the old, be a revelation of God to him. On the other hand the Spirit dwells within him to prepare him for that home.

The antithesis drawn by Dr. Fairbairn, "God inspires, man reveals," † would thus seem to be misleading. The power of Inspiration is indeed purely Divine; so God inspires. But Revelation is not,

* "Revelation and the Bible," p. 18.

† "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 496.

except in a subordinate sense, the work of man. On the contrary, in the highest sense, God alone reveals—God in the Person of the Word. That which man cannot find for himself God declares to him. It is true that no revelation is made to man without an embodiment, and that man provides this first, and chiefly in the person of The Man, and afterwards in human words, and characters, and institutions, but we must not confound Revelation with its outward form. Dr. Sanday's criticism* on Dr. Fairbairn's epigram would seem to be fully justified. "The context" (in Dr. Fairbairn's remarks) "shews that it is as correct to say, 'God reveals'; but it is through men the revelation takes concrete shape." But if this be so the antithesis is false.

God having made a revelation of Himself, and having also given man spiritual power to discern it, man attains to the Divine knowledge, and immediately, after his nature, sets himself to give it various concrete forms. A kingdom of heaven is established; the Divine life is faithfully lived; Divine truth is expressed in human words and preserved in writing. It is the last of these forms with which we are at present concerned. The Bible, we see, is the inspired record of Revelation. Had not God revealed Himself man would have had nothing to write. Had not He put of His Spirit into man, man would not have had the capacity of writing. But the Bible is not to be identified with Revelation, or indeed with any or all of its human embodiments.† To do this in the

* "Inspiration," note, p. 125. †

† This Dr. Fairbairn seems to do when he says, "Revelation is the mode or form—word, character, or institution—in which man embodies what he has received."

case of the Bible is to confound the Word, and in particular the Word Incarnate, with the written Word. In the highest sense the Word who was in the beginning, who was with God and was God, and who in the fulness of time became flesh, is the only Revelation of God. Nature since He constituted it, History since He rules in it, the Church since it is His Body, the Bible since it testifies of Him, are all modes, or forms, or means of His Revelation. They are but lamps: He is the True Light who coming into the world enlighteneth every man.

A practical result of this is that we should not inquire too carefully what it is in any passage of Holy Scripture which constitutes its Inspiration. The Old Testament might be called with equal truth the historical record of the inspired nation, Israel; or the inspired record of Israel's thought and national life. So far as the two things are different the Old Testament is both. Israel herself as well as her book declare to us the character of the Divine Inspiration.

The difference between Revelation and Inspiration is stated with great clearness by Mr. Thomson in "Revelation and the Bible." *

"Both revelation and inspiration are the result of Divine action. The object of both is to impart to man the knowledge of Divine things. Both seek the same practical outcome from this knowledge, in man's heart and life. And both the act of revelation and the act of inspiration on the part of God would occur without the knowledge received by man being committed to writing. Yet in some important respects the one act is different from the other. There

* Page 18.

might be revelation without inspiration. The death of Christ, for instance, was a revelation of God's holy love. It was this in its simple character as a fact. And the entire revelation was in the fact quite independently of the apprehension of its meaning on the part of any human being. Nor could anything whatsoever, happening in the mind of any Apostle or of any other person, take from or add to or modify in any way the revelation which the fact embodied. The revelation was there whether men were able or not to apprehend the meaning of the fact. Inspiration, on the other hand, was that which enabled men, like Paul, to understand the fact, to see the revelation of God's holy love embodied in it. In His act of revelation, God unveils that which He desires men to know; in His act of inspiration, He opens the eyes of men's minds to see that which He has unveiled. Moreover, the act of revelation and the act of inspiration might not take place at one and the same time. There was a revelation conveyed in the fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead; but it was a considerable time after the event that Paul was inspired to see its significance and its bearings upon human destiny."

III

HOW ALL TEACHING COMES TO MAN.

THE teaching contained in the Bible is a particular kind of teaching, and so it seems reasonable to suppose that it follows the laws which govern teaching generally. It will consequently be helpful to us in our inquiry to consider how all teaching is wont to come to man and become his own. It is not the various ways of giving, but the general conditions governing the reception of teaching which we need most to consider. We want to ascertain the kind of teaching which men are able to appropriate.

It will be readily admitted that teaching of every kind and on every subject has not only to be effectively given, but effectively received. The disciple must take a substantial and an active part in the work of his own education. Knowledge cannot be poured into a man as water into a cistern. It is a homely proverb that any man can take a horse to the water, but no man can make him drink ; so in the case of the higher animal—man, the best of teachers can effect nothing without the co-operation of his scholar. A man cannot be fed either in body or mind unless he himself is able to receive and digest his food. As we digest it we impress on it something of our personal

character. The knowledge we possess is ordinarily not the same as the knowledge given to us. We modify it in the act of making it our own.

Our knowledge depends for its reception on our faculties, and our faculties of reception depend on their previous training, and on the knowledge previously digested. In consequence the teacher, if he is to be efficient, must take us as we are, build on previously laid foundations, find points of contact between his thoughts—the thoughts which he is going to communicate to us—and our thoughts, *i.e.* the thoughts and ideas which we have already made our own. It is absolutely impossible for us to receive some teaching, and why? Because we have not mastered the knowledge on which it is based. Some thoughts our teacher cannot communicate to us, and why? The only words in which he could express them, though in his stock, are not in ours. We possess no words or symbols in which he could embody his thoughts. Every great teacher has many things to say to us which we cannot bear now. In consequence he is obliged to do what our parents did for us long ago. They took us as we were, and accommodated themselves to our infant minds and conceptions. They taught us in monosyllables, they gave to us precept upon precept, line upon line, a little here and a little there. They pictured the truth for us in images, they drew it in outline. They gave us half-truths since we could not bear the whole. They did more, we may venture to say, and used unrealities to bring home to us some truth.

Now children's minds have narrow limitations, but they have some special advantages. The time of

childhood is the time for learning. Children can learn readily, because they are innocent, they have not formed false conceptions of things. There is little or nothing to pluck up or expel before the planting or imparting work begins. There are, however, full grown men, ignorant as children, whose minds are besides perverted by falsehood. Now it is impossible for the missionary teacher to make a clean sweep of all this at once. It is part of the man he is seeking to instruct. He must seize on some fragment of truth mixed with and embedded in error. He must pass over, or deal very tenderly with, the error for the sake of its accompanying and perhaps hidden truth. He will not attempt at first to root out the tares, lest he root out the wheat with them. He bears and forbears in order that he may be able to bring his thoughts in contact with his disciples' thoughts, and his mind with their minds. He hopes that thus he may be able to communicate to them some new truth which will in due course neutralize or annihilate the errors as yet part of his disciples' selves. In a word, he must do as St. Paul did on Areopagus, and declare to them God who made the world and all things that are therein—Jesus and the Resurrection, using for his text a heathen altar to an unknown god. Is there any presumption in saying that it is thus all teaching must come to man? Man being what he is, his teacher must build on foundations, or, it may be, ruins, in the man's own self; he must accommodate himself and condescend to his pupils' ignorance and error. No it is not presumption to say this, for our experience indicates that it is thus, by God's ordering, all teaching comes to man. We are not, it is true, competent

judges of God's methods—*i.e.* the ways in which God dispenses His gifts—but we can observe them; we know something of human nature, and know in consequence how we are able to learn. Applying these principles in detail to the Divine Revelation, we humbly acknowledge at the outset that God must take the first step in that great work. From Him must issue forth the Divine Light, Truth and Life. Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above. We believe, further, that every Revelation of truth comes from Him in whom can be no variableness or shadow caused by turning, and that its end is the perfection of man. But is every Divine Revelation perfect in itself? Can we regard this as possible since it must be received by us men before it reveals anything to us? At the best we are ignorant children, but at our worst we are degraded heathen whom, since we refused to have God in our knowledge, God gave up unto a reprobate mind. God's truth, if it is to be made ours, must needs come in a form suited to our imperfect and perverted capacities. So here there rises before us that marvellous fact which we call the Divine condescension. Without it no revelation of the Infinite to the Finite, much more of the All-wise and All-holy God to the fallen creature, is possible. That condescension is a necessity of *all* revelation, though it reached its crown and climax in the Incarnation. The Word of God condescended to come down from heaven, ages before He was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary; and He never ceases to condescend to speak in baby language to us who are no better than babes. He gives pictures and shadows to us who could not bear the glory of

realities. He wraps His teaching in imperfect images because they are understood by us ; in fables which seem to us verities, in shadows which we deem to be substantial. Direct vision is impossible to us, so He ordains that we should see through a mirror. He half veils whilst He half reveals the truth, because the whole would dazzle our eyes. He gives us a little because we are not capable of much. He feeds us with milk and not with meat because we are not able to bear it. He adapts His revelation, not merely to our weakness and childishness, but also to our inherited and established falsehoods, and in particular to our false religious and moral ideas. He takes us as we are, as all human teachers must, in order to make us better than we are. He suffers, as in the Mosaic Law, things that He disapproves, that He may replace them by something better. He suffers—nay, the word is not strong enough—He ordains things contrary to His mind, because it is only thus we can be fashioned according to His mind. Illustrations of such methods of work abound in Holy Scripture. The law of divorce contained in Deuteronomy is one of the Divine statutes and ordinances commanded by God, nevertheless it is quite plainly contrary to His mind as declared in the original institution of marriage, or by the prophet Malachi, "I hate putting away," or by our Lord Himself. Men's hearts are so hard that divorce must be first permitted that at last it may be abolished. The *Lex Talionis* and the institution of the Avenger of Blood—these, again, receive His direct sanction until the time comes for the higher rule, "I say unto you, Resist not evil, and Love your enemies." The law of animal sacrifice—

this, again, is a remarkable condescension to human weakness. In the sacrificial law God accepts gifts which have no value in His eyes, even as a father would accept and expect worthless or even distasteful gifts from his little child. We see God's mind in regard to animal sacrifices in the prophets, and above all in the New Testament (the Epistle to the Hebrews), and not in the Mosaic Law. Nevertheless the laws commanding sacrifices were laws of God. And are there also similar condescensions in Christianity? We may answer confidently that there are some which we know and many more beyond our present thoughts. Why was there no law forbidding slavery in the New Testament? Christian people took eighteen centuries to learn the fact, seemingly so obvious, that slavery was contrary to the mind of Christ. Was it not, again, because of the hardness of Christian hearts that war was not forbidden by an express command? Proofs are abundant for our proposition that the Divine Revelation, in order that it may be efficacious, must be presented in a manner suited to human capacities and attainments. The ray of light from God is veiled and also refracted by earth's atmosphere and clouds.

And here we may notice that this same truth is involved in the fact that the Bible contains a progressive revelation. The days of the Patriarchs were days of the infancy, the days of Moses and the Judges days of the childhood of our race. We may, perhaps, regard Adam and Eve as the first beings who emerged from mere animal life and attained to—that which is man's distinguishing characteristic—the knowledge of God and the power of

holding communion with Him. However this may be, it is inconceivable to regard Adam as a full-grown man in spiritual things. Wisdom comes from experience ; Adam could have none. God would not create for him an unreal history in the past. Those words, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," describe the invariable Divine order in our creation. "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," lights up the path on which the human race must necessarily walk towards its perfection. But if Adam and the patriarchs and the children of Israel were babes or children, compared with ourselves, who had not passed beyond the childish stage, must not Revelation have done much in the way of accommodating itself to their extreme spiritual childishness ? Things which are necessary for children are not good for full-grown men, and a father delights to see his children put away the childish things which he himself gave. But the children must have what is good for them ; and such were the anthropomorphisms of Genesis, the customs and institutions of a crude religion and a rude morality, the statutes which are no longer good and the judgments by which men cannot live now. The Father gave what His children needed. When we study these primitive things we should not estimate them by the lofty standard of Divine wisdom and goodness, but by the mean standard of human capacity. All of them illustrate the Divine condescension to childish and fallen man. In all of them, we might say, God came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation.

The first stage in Revelation—the initial act of

God in giving life or light—has been described ; now let us pass on to the second. The Divine thought having been fitted to the human capacity, enters into the human soul—the inspired human soul, it may be, *i.e.* the human soul prepared and assisted and elevated by the Spirit to receive it. Whether inspired or not, the receptacle of the Divine thought is man, and nothing more, for it is to man that the revelation is being made. The inspired seer is indeed elevated amongst his fellows, but he is not taken away from their ranks. If he were, Inspiration would defeat its own purpose—to teach man Divine truths. Now it seems plain that one who is only man can never perfectly comprehend the Divine teaching. He forms an idea of it, an idea with greater or less imperfection ; but perfection is beyond him. The Divine teaching is limited by his own limitations, it is corrupted by his own corruptions. The Divine Inspiration enlarges a man's limits and purifies his conceptions, but does not wholly remove them. The element of Time comes in also ; seeds take time to grow. We remember our Lord's exclamation, "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip ?" We know that the apostles, even after they had received the Holy Ghost, arrived very slowly at the knowledge of certain Christian truths. And that knowledge was truly their own. It took form and shape from their individual minds and characters. The apostle St. Paul had not the same idea of Christian truth as the apostles St. James or St. John. How could it be otherwise ? Is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ too vast a treasure to be contained in any earthen vessel ? Now a truth

which has been limited must have the character of imperfection, and contain in itself the seed of error. And, besides, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to St. Paul, must needs have much of St. Paul in it. We are apt to forget this—apt, that is to say, to forget how all teaching, when received, takes much of its form and substance from the receiving mind.

There are two events recorded in Holy Scripture which seem to teach us how materially Divine teaching is thus modified. One is an event in our Lord's life. In answer to His prayer, "Father, glorify Thy Name," there came a voice from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."* It would seem, though it is not expressly stated, that the disciples, and not our Lord only, heard and understood this voice. It came, Our Lord says, for their sakes. The multitude, on the other hand, heard nothing but an inarticulate sound ; "It thundered," they said. Others recognized the tones of a voice, "An angel spake to Him ;" but they did not know what was said. It is to be observed that one and the same revelation is given to all, but it is received and understood differently according to the varying spiritual capacities of the men who heard it. Must it not be always so ? And again the Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus and his companions on the way to Damascus. He saw the Lord, they only saw a light. He heard the Lord speak and recognized the words ; they heard a voice, if indeed they did hear one, but they heard no words.

Now it should be observed that it is clearly

* John xii. 28-30.

indicated in both cases that the Revelation was not subjective. A noise was heard by many in our Lord's vision; a light was seen and a voice was heard by Saul's companions. These visions, it is plain, might have been seen by many if they had eyes to see. Thus, they illustrate the assertion made, that the Revelation of God takes its form and character from those who hear it; it becomes real and intelligible according to their spiritual capacity.

Now comes the third stage. When the human heart has received and digested the Divine truth, it becomes a human conception. It has passed from God to man, and become man's own. What then? It has next to be brought to the birth; it must be clothed in a human body; *i.e.* expressed in a human word. The word used must be an old one with a definite meaning attached to it; otherwise it will not give the new truth expression. We talk about coining words, but coining words is simply melting up old words and combining them into new. Now words are imperfect expressions of our thoughts. It is often impossible in great earthly matters to find words which express what we think, or feel, or see. We sometimes find it necessary to use words connoting imperfect and erroneous ideas to express great truths. Words, moreover, cannot be otherwise than imperfect, for they are children of men, with their fathers' natural imperfections. There is, it is clear, no sacred language—*i.e.* no language revealed by God for the embodiment of Divine truths. The idea is indeed absurd. A word is no use to a man till, by passing through his mind, it becomes his own. It may be said, Could not God, who gave the word, give it its meaning? The idea

may be conceivable in the case of an individual—the inspired prophet. A Divine explanation might accompany the word, but it is certainly a reversal of God's ordinary methods; and unless this instruction was also given to all those to whom the prophet spoke, he would speak to them in an unknown tongue. It seems clear that the words embodying Divine truths must, like all other words, pass through human minds before they can be used. It is quite clear that Hebrew, though some have thought the contrary, has no claim to be the original language of man. And the Bible indicates, in conformity with universal experience, that man's language grew with man's growth, and in correspondence with his needs. "The Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof."* Man gave names to the animals as they were brought to his notice; generalizing somewhat, we may say that man formed his own language as he wanted it. It would seem that we have here a parable of the origin of all language. It is a human product, a photograph taken by the human brain. Like all photographs, words limit and sometimes distort the things they picture. They can never be more than descriptions from one point of view.

Church history very clearly illustrates the difficulty of expressing Divine truths in human words, and also new truths in old words. Old Greek words were modified in meaning, that they might describe

* Gen. ii. 19.

doctrines and virtues distinctively Christian. The early controversies owed much of their complexity and difficulty to the fact that the words of theological terminology had not been fixed in their meaning. Old meanings or connected ideas had not been finally excluded, the new meanings had not been exactly defined. And it should be noted that troubles arose not merely with words used in the Creed, but also with words used in the Bible. "Son" and "Word" are terms which the Bible adopts to express the relation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity to the First. Both suggested ideas justifiable by the rules of etymology or previous history, but inadmissible from the theological point of view. It could not be otherwise. Human words, expressing human conceptions, could only be shadows of shadows when expressing Divine truths.

There is a well-known theory of Inspiration called "verbal Inspiration." Its object is to minimize and even annihilate the human element in the Bible. It is open to objections of great weight, and brings Reason in direct conflict with Faith. I mention this theory here because it fails to accomplish its ends. If the Bible is verbally inspired, the human element remains substantial. Even if the Holy Spirit chose the words for His revelation of truth, they were all man-made words from amongst which He chose.

We have traced the human element in Revelation in the form in which it is presented by God to man, in its reception by the human spirit, in its embodiment in human words. There is one other particular in which man has the chief part—God uses human agents for the promulgation of His Divine message. We know

that God does not create new beings, of a higher and purer kind, to spread the knowledge of His will ; He uses the available men with all their imperfections : men of like passions with ourselves, as the prophet Elijah ; unlearned and ignorant men, as Peter and John ; men, however great their qualifications, spiritual and intellectual, who are of the same limited nature as ourselves ; sometimes even men of little spirituality or of low morality, like the prophet Balaam or the traitor Judas. It is very remarkable how God respects the human creature He has made. He respects man's will, and allows it, seemingly, to thwart His own. He respects man's lordship in creation. He assists, He rebukes, He chastises His viceroy, but never deposes him. Though nothing is done on earth of which God is not the doer ; there is nothing done on earth—in the intellectual or moral or spiritual domain—which He does apart from His viceroy, man.

And this can be very clearly seen in the several books of the Bible. The individuality of the different authors, their circumstances, their limitations, are clearly seen. The Old Testament authors write their books in Hebrew, not all equally good. The New Testament authors use Greek which never conforms to the classical models. The Divine Inspiration does not emancipate men from the danger of grammatical mistakes, nor does it endow them with excellence of style. It needs no highly developed critical faculty to discern how the spirit of the beloved disciple dominates his writings, and how the Epistles of St. Paul are imbued with his impetuosity, earnestness, and zeal for souls. The books of the

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Bible, considered as literature, are not all on the same high level. In a word, the inspired writers of the books of the Bible are very truly and really authors still. How the Spirit of the Lord came to these authors is uncertain. How God and His human ministers co-operated together we cannot say. But it is clear that from the facts before us, *i.e.* the internal phenomena of the different books, that the writers of the record of the Revelation were not nominally but actually and efficiently fellow-workers with their God.

IV

WHAT ANALOGY INDICATES AS TO THE GENERAL METHOD OF GOD'S WORKING

THE Bible is not the only means used by God for revealing Himself to man. He reveals Himself in Nature—Heaven and earth are full of His Glory ; in History—the Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of man and appointeth over it whomsoever He will. We can see His hand if we have eyes to see. Above all He has revealed Himself in His Only Begotten Son. No man hath seen God at any time. The Only Begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him. The Revelations made in God's Personal Word, and in His Written Word have of course much in common, but they are not identical ; the one is the written record of the other. We men have therefore considerable experience in regard to the methods God is wont to use when making a Revelation of Himself. The different Revelations since they all alike have God for their Author, since they have the same great purpose, to manifest God to man, since they all follow the same general plan, through the visible to reveal Him who is invisible, must needs be to some extent analogous one to the other. Reason has something to say

about the Divine workings in Nature. It is not indeed a fit judge of their wisdom and goodness, but it can discern something of their character. We can also observe God's workings in human and natural life, and we know how He was pleased to reveal Himself in Jesus Christ. Thus we are able to discern, to some extent, how God works. And we are entitled to say that no *a priori* objection against the Bible derived from the means apparently used there, can have any force if we find a similar means for revealing Himself used elsewhere. We may go further and say that the observed use by God of some particular method in one sphere of Revelation makes it to some extent probable that He will use a similar method in another sphere. Possibly the chief result of our observations will be to produce in us a still stronger conviction of our incompetency to decide what methods God is likely or unlikely to use. We shall realize that His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out. The line of argument suggested here is of course substantially the same as that followed by Butler in his "Analogy." It differs of course in its assumptions, because it is addressed, not to Deists, but to believers in the Divine Revelation. It differs likewise in its objects, because it seeks, not to remove *a priori* objections to Revelation in itself, but to throw light on the character of the means by which God made it. The argument, however, is identical in its essence, though differing in its application, and it is suitable to the times, for both believers and unbelievers, like the Deists in Butler's days, are inclined to reason on hypotheses. They neglect the obligation of searching the

Scriptures in order to see what the scheme of Revelation really is, and they determine beforehand (whether on grounds of reason or of faith) what the scheme of it must be. They neglect to observe God's methods of communicating a knowledge of His will to us so far as they are open to observation, and determine on abstract grounds, that if the Bible is the Word of God this or that quality must be present or absent. This human quality is present, say Rationalists, therefore the Bible cannot be the Word of God. The Bible is the Word of God, say believers, and therefore that human quality cannot be present. Men's reason, which affirms that it is, leads them astray. To both Butler's warning may be addressed: "We are in no sort judges what are the necessary means for accomplishing [God's] ends."

It is very natural, in regarding any work of God, to draw the inference that being Divine it must be perfect. There can be no defect or flaw, men say, in anything which is truly Divine. Prove the defect or flaw, and you have disproved the divinity. This is an *a priori* argument, and observation would seem to disprove it. There is, indeed, no work of God within the reach of our knowledge which can be said to be perfect. This is a very remarkable fact, and has, perhaps, this explanation. Under the present order every Work of God is imperfect because it is unfinished. We see rough-hewn blocks, not the polished and perfect statues. A more common explanation, which seems to satisfy many, is that the imperfection we observe in God's works is due to the Fall of man. It is a fallen world in which we live. Creation was made subject to vanity and participated in man's

curse. But can every evil and defect in Creation be so traced? And if it could, ought we not to go further back and inquire to what cause we should trace the Fall itself? Is not liability to fall itself an imperfection? There is a law of our Creation existing unnumbered years before the Fall of Adam, according to which everything grows gradually to its perfection. Nothing, such is God's Will, is born full-grown. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," is God's way with all the creatures of which we have knowledge. In the history of man first there comes the weakness of infancy, then full-grown strength; first ignorance, then experience; first savagery, then civilization. Science tells us of its stone and bronze and iron ages, and history in different language tells us the same thing. Revelation speaks of its fulness of time. Everything in this world seems to have its childhood and its manhood. The childhood comes first, the manhood is very slowly reached. We can discern the working of this law even in such things as minerals. They were prepared for man's use in the course of ages. Now, is this law of growth a law of our fallen world only? Is it reasonable to suppose that the Fall so completely revolutionized the conditions of creaturely existence that it brought the different forms of life for the first time under the law of growth. Such a supposition seems unnatural in the highest degree, and there is no doubt what the judgment of science on the matter is. But the teaching of Revelation is equally plain. The first chapter of Genesis teaches us that Creation was under the law of growth from its beginning. First Chaos, then Kosmos; first the

lowest, last the highest forms of life. The Divine Wisdom is revealed to us not so much in the beginning of Creation as in its end. Living creatures have implanted within them a marvellous power of growing to their perfection, or as we may more accurately express it, living creatures never cease to be the subjects of God's workings, they never pass outside Nature's laws which are His moulding hands.

Cognate to what has been said, and developing it slightly, is the fact that not every creature of God is to our mind beautiful, or lovely, or noble, or useful. If we say they are, we are walking by faith, not by sight. Faith sees them as they will be, sight as they are. Many things are strange and weird, we might say also, mean, ugly, and harmful. Cunning serpents and savage wild beasts, and noxious plants and vegetation, the foul vapours or the climatic circumstances which make some districts deserts or valleys of death—these, so far as we can view them, cannot be regarded as anything but evil. If it be said we are not qualified to judge, the answer is, Very true, then let us remember that things which the sober judgment and universal consent of mankind pronounce to be evil are nevertheless God's works. Evil, in a thing seeming evil, does not entitle us to infer that the Lord has not done it. This is a wide-reaching principle, and it should be consistently applied.

And Man—God's noblest work—how chequered and mysterious is his history ! He, it is plain, was not born full-grown. He had, like every other child, to learn to be a man. And it is not to the Fall that he can trace all his imperfections. The Bible story

of his naming the living creatures, and his searching for a helpmeet amongst them, indicates this. Experience is a treasure which each man must gather for himself. The stores of human knowledge are gradually collected. Adam and Eve, if created in the full perfection of their bodily powers, could not have been rich as men now are in regard to the treasures of the past. To regard Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden as perfect is to confound perfection with innocence; and Adam's innocence was not that of beings who have passed through evil, but the innocence of a child whose senses are not exercised to discern between good and evil. We talk sometimes of a perfect child, but a child is essentially imperfect, and the man Adam was in many senses a child. The Fall itself proves this. The serpent's craft, as it is described to us, was adapted to a being of extreme simplicity and ignorance. God's noblest work was thus, at its first manifestation in the world, full of imperfections.

The history of mankind in the world teaches similar lessons. There have been many saints of God, men of God's own making, and remaking besides. These walk with God, have God for their portion, reflect God's image, and are in a very true sense sons of God. Nevertheless none of these approached perfection, though they were moving towards it and will, we believe, attain it in the end. Of God's own fashioning were all these, although they were, nevertheless, imperfect. Yet again, God has chosen for Himself and created a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. Its members are called "the general

assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven." Many an image tells of the Church's true divinity and the closeness of its relation with God. Yet, though it is the Body to which the God is Son of Head, and which the Spirit of God fulfils, in it evil is ever mingled with the good. History proves over abundantly that it is as yet far removed from what it is to be, viz. a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The Bride of the Lamb has not yet made herself ready for her marriage. The strongest and most remarkable proof of the point I have been labouring, still remains to be given. The supreme Revelation of God is in Jesus Christ. To reveal God to man, the Only Begotten Son, the very image of God's substance, humbles Himself to become part of this world's Creation. Submitting Himself to its laws, He became imperfect too. He came to be the first and last of a new Creation of perfect men, and it was His good will Himself to grow to His perfection like every man. It behoved Him, the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, to make the Author of man's salvation perfect through sufferings. Though He was a Son yet learned He obedience through the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect He became unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation. The records of our Lord's life declare clearly our Lord's imperfection. At the beginning of His life, the Son of God was unable to take in hand the work of salvation for which He came down from heaven. The Word of God could not even speak, and the Saviour Himself

stood in need of human ministry for the preservation of His infant life. During the first thirty years of His short earthly sojourn the weaknesses natural to immaturity incapacitated Him from beginning His great work. Increase in wisdom and stature implies previous defects therein. And, indeed, human weaknesses hindered Him all through the period of His condescension. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," He says; "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"* He was a creature of time and His day was short. He could not, being man, be everywhere present, and so His manifestation of God's glory could be seen only by a few in a single corner of the world. It was suffering humanity He assumed, and suffering implies imperfection in nature. We could not have imagined that so it would be. We should have clothed the Son of God in the perfection of beauty, whereas it is said that He had no form or comeliness. The glory of the Transfiguration should have, to our thinking, been His perpetual state. How plainly does the Incarnate Son of God, despised and rejected of men, teach us that God's Revelations of Himself come to us in unlikely ways, and in unworthy (to our thinking) forms. Readers of Church History will know how great a stumbling-block the weakness and sufferings of Jesus Christ placed in the way of belief in Him in the early Christian ages, and how strong was the tendency for many centuries to some kind of Docetism. It was very difficult for men to believe that the human nature of the Son of God could be in all respects identical with our own. It is still found difficult;

* Luke xii. 50.

but if we can conquer the difficulty and see the Son of God in the infant, the growing child, the Man of infirmities and weaknesses, the Crucified Malefactor, we shall never dare to say that the Word of God cannot be embodied in forms ignoble, as the critics would have us believe certain parts of the Bible are. The critics may be right or they may be wrong. In my belief they are very often wrong. But if they are right in their analysis of the outward form of the Bible, they do not throw doubts on its Inspiration.

Another great truth which the analogy of God's workings suggests to us is that in the work of the formation of the Bible, man is a true co-operator with God.

It is said expressly of men once or twice in the Bible that they are fellow-workers with God, and, what is far more, the Bible throughout represents man as working along with his Maker. Moreover, the Bible very clearly teaches that it is within man's power to refuse his co-operation. Notwithstanding this, men find it hard to believe that it is possible for them truly to co-operate with God. "Co-operation," or working along with, is indeed a remarkable word to use in this connection. It implies something like equality. One of many fellow-workers may be indeed supreme, but all have a substantial share in the work done by them in common. The co-operator is something more than an underling, and he is much more than a tool. The co-operator cannot be used by the master-workman solely at his good will and pleasure. It is within his power to hinder or advance the accomplishment of the work in which he is engaged. This being so, it is not unnatural for us

men to stagger at the word "co-operate" because of our unbelief. We can understand how the dwarf might on occasion aid the giant, or the mouse, the lion ; we can even measure the strength of an insignificant insect against the strength of man ; but we cannot compare the finite with the infinite. How then can a man's action aid or hinder the action of God ? The thing is inconceivable by human reason, yet it is true. It would seem as if in some spheres of God's action and pre-eminently in the greatest of all—the sphere of regeneration and re-creation—He does nothing without the co-operation of man. The work, remaining divine, has also a human character. It would also seem that man can frustrate God's purposes for himself, not indeed eternally, but in his own world of time. He can hasten the coming of the day of God, consequently he can retard it.* By his faith and patience he can spread the Gospel amongst all the nations ; by his unbelief he can narrow, for a time, the limits of the kingdom of Christ. We cannot understand how these things can be, but we have sufficient proof that God has so willed it. He has created a race of beings who can, if they please, assume an attitude of opposition to Him, and who have, in a certain sense, a position of independence in regard to Him. They are called to work for Him and with Him, but they can refuse.

The co-operation of man with God is seen in the government of the world. Co-operation between superior and inferior beings implies authority given by the one and received by the other. Man has received such authority. A charge has been given

* 2 Pet. iii. 12.

him to replenish the earth and subdue it, and he has been given dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth. God remains the supreme King, man is His viceroy in the world of matter and of sense, and all things have been placed under man's feet. What is the history of mankind, but a history of the gradual establishment of his rule over the lower animals, and his control over the powers of Nature? Gradually he brings his allotment into cultivation. He who is truly and effectively king in one of the kingdoms of the universe, must needs be a co-operator with God. But it is in the history of the new Creation that man's co-operation can be most clearly traced. It would be impossible for us to estimate the share the angels take in this work, but apart from them, men are the chief, as they are the only visible workmen whom God employs in this, the greatest of God's works.

It is only through man that men attain to the knowledge of God and His will. It is through them alone that the Gospel is preached and the kingdom of heaven is set up. And man's share in the new Creation is rightly called "co-operation." The Body could not act without the Spirit, but neither is the Spirit wont to work apart from the Body. Two wills and two understandings share in the work of the salvation of man. God does not force man's will or put aside his understanding. He strengthens the one and illuminates the other, and so raises man to be an effective fellow-worker with Himself.

But the greatest proof that man is capable of being and actually is a fellow-worker with God is derived

from the Incarnation. The work of salvation is human as well as Divine. The power was Divine, but the instrument used was human nature with its weakness and sufferings. It may be said that our Lord's condescension consisted in doing nothing save through the instrumentality of that human nature which He had assumed. That human nature was altogether like our own, weakened by the Fall, not as yet glorified by the Resurrection. The co-operation between the Divine and the human in the person of our Lord was complete and it was effectual. He finished the work which His Father had given Him to do. So we are assured that human faculties are such that God can use them, and that they are capable of accomplishing the most difficult and the greatest of Divine works. By man came, as St. Paul says, the abundance of grace, justification of life, and righteousness. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." *

It is plain that in our Lord Jesus Christ and His work upon earth, we have presented to us the ideal of all Divine workings upon earth and of all co-operations between God and Man. Not only the ideal, but the example: what the God-man accomplished, all men in their measure are called upon and enabled to do. In the work of the new Creation, there is nothing done upon earth of which God is not the doer, there is also nothing done by God which is not done through redeemed and re-created man.

If, then, in the great work of Divine salvation God and man co-operate in the Person of Jesus Christ first, and afterwards in the persons of those who have been

* 1 Cor. xv. 21, and cf. Rom. v.

fulfilled by His Spirit, there can be no difficulty in believing that God and man co-operated in making the written record of Revelation. If the work of man in the one was substantial, it surely may be in the other. And if we find in Revelation the usual traces of man's work we cannot be surprised. This seems certain if the one Lord Jesus Christ is both God and Man; one book can be both human and Divine. Proofs that it is so we defer for the present. All that we contend for here is that the analogy of the Divine rule in the world and of the Divine plan for its redemption and re-creation, indicates that it is likely so to be.

V

WHAT IS LEARNED BY ANALOGY FROM THE SPECIAL WORKING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD

THE work of the Inspiration of the sacred writers is ascribed in the Bible and in the Creed to the Holy Spirit of God. It is needless to prove this fact, for it is universally acknowledged. And it cannot be wrong to assume that the works of the Spirit may have a specific character. By considering His different works we may be able to throw light on His work of Inspiration. The very word "inspiration" connects it with the Spirit of God. It suggests to us that as the Father is the Source of life, and Salvation is the work of the Lord Jesus, so it may be, not merely a work, but *the* Work of the Spirit to inspire. It will be observed that we are again using an argument of an analogical kind. The Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, it is needless to say, co-operated in the great work of Creation. But distinctions are drawn between their operations. The Father is the First Cause, the Son is the Mediator in Creation, but the Holy Spirit is described as the Giver of Life. It will be remembered that, in the Nicene Creed, it is said of the Father that, "He is the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and

invisible ; " similarly it is said of the Son, " By or through whom all things were made." The corresponding statement concerning the Spirit of God is that He is " the Giver of Life." It is undoubtedly the teaching of the Church that the Spirit along with the Father and the Son is the Creator. *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, we are wont to sing. The Anomœans in the fourth century declared Him to be a Creature destitute of Deity and Creative Power. Against them the doctrine of the Church that the Holy Spirit was equal in power to the Father and the Son was very clear. But a difference in the Spirit's Creative Power seems to be taught us. Special pains are taken to connect the Creative Power of the Father and the Son with things material, as well as with things spiritual. Thus the Father is the Maker of earth as well as of heaven, and, with something of repetition, of things visible as well as of things invisible. The Church in her Creed looked back to the first words of her written revelation, " In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and was careful to oppose Gnostic error in regard to the eternal existence and evil nature of matter. Similarly the clause, " By whom all things were made," connects the Son likewise with the creation of material substance. And here again the Scriptural statements are clear, for St. John says, " All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not anything made."* And St. Paul even still more definitely says, " In Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, . . . all things have been created through

* John i. 3.

Him and unto Him."* The statements of Holy Scripture concerning the Spirit's creative work are less definite and formal, but they seem to teach us that His work was not to create material substances, but to give life to them when made. We read in the first words of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The first act of Creation was thus the Creation of matter—formless, lifeless matter. Then mention is made of the Spirit and His work. The Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters. We naturally connect that brooding with all the different forms of life which followed in their due order. The earth having got its body, it was the function of the Spirit to supply its soul, its breath, its life, and this under very different forms. With this interpretation the words of the Psalm of Creation agree. Death is described as the taking away of the breath.† "Thou takest away their breath they die, and are turned again to their dust." Creation on the other hand is the giving of the breath—the Divine breath or Spirit.‡ "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created." Doubtless in the passages quoted, as in all other Old Testament passages, the word "Spirit" had not the fulness of its New Testament meaning. The Divine Spiritual energy had not yet been revealed as a Divine Person. Nevertheless the undefined "Spirit" of the Old Testament is one and the same with the revealed Spirit of the New.

The same inference may be drawn from the

* Col. i. 16.

† Ps. civ. 29, 30.

‡ The Hebrew word for "Spirit" and "breath" is the same.

record of the making of man which we find in Genesis ii. 7. It is said the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. There seem to be, or rather there are represented to us two Divine acts here; first the forming of the body out of the dust, and second its inspiration by the breath of God. The work characteristic of the Spirit is distinguished from, and follows after, the forming of the material body.*

There is a marvellous vision in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, the vision of the Dry Bones, which describes the work of the Spirit in re-creation. Again we find the same sequence of events as at the original Creation. First there is chaos—the waste and desolate valley full of bones, very many and very dry. Next there comes order, the bodies of the dead are re-formed. Bone comes to his bone, sinews and flesh come up, and skin covers all. Last of all these bodies are inspired. "Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." The interpretation follows, "I will put My Spirit in you, O My people, and ye shall live." The point to observe is that it is not the Spirit's work to remake the bodies, but to fill these when remade with life.

The work of the Spirit in the Incarnation is closely analogous to His work in the first creation. The Blessed Virgin conceives and is quickened by the Holy Ghost. Our Lord takes His human nature

* Contrast this verse with verse 19 which tells us of the making of the animals. It is only into man that God is said to have breathed. All animals have, however, this breath. Cf. Gen. vii. 22. The word for "breath" in this verse is not the same word as "breath" = "spirit" in Ps. civ. 29, 30.

in the womb of the Blessed Virgin of her substance. The Spirit gives the life. The Holy Thing that is born of her is called the Son of God. Again the day which may be called the great day of Divine Inspiration, the Day of Pentecost, came. On that day the Holy Spirit does not form new men to be His living temples. He comes down upon men already reformed by the hand of their Master Christ, and therefore prepared to receive Him; men with established characters of their own ; and He quickens them with new and higher life.

The Day of Pentecost initiated a new era. The Holy Ghost came to abide in His Church for ever. We remember that the Church and the Holy Ghost are placed over against one another as Body and Spirit. There is one Body and one Spirit—one organization and one inspiring life. The Holy Spirit, moreover, dwells in the individual Christian as well as in the whole Church. As the human body is the dwelling-place of the human spirit, so the bodies and souls of men are the Spirit's shrines.

All the facts recorded concerning the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit seem to suggest the same inference, viz., that the work of the Holy Spirit of God is the work of Inspiration or the giving of life to something which has the nature of a body. The inference I wish to draw by way of analogy is, that the Holy Spirit, when inspiring the sacred Scriptures or their writers, acts even as He acted at the Creation and at the Re-Creation, in the making of the first Adam and of the Second; in the quickening of the Second Adam's natural Body, or of His mystical Body—the Church. It is not His function, we infer, to create

an organization but to inspire it with life when made. First the materials, the substance, the outward form are made, and then the Spirit breathes in the Divine life. The body may be vile, waste and void as the earth in the beginning ; dust of the ground, the material of man's body ; dry bones, sinful and imperfect man. He inspires that body, whatever it may be, and transforms and quickens it by His inspiration. To apply what has been said to our special subject—He takes the thoughts and words of men, ancient traditions, family narratives, national records, words of human wisdom, laws and institutions—things in themselves temporary and partial—and makes them into the everlasting Word of God, speaking to all nations and generations of mankind, able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. In other words the Bible has a human body, but a Divine Spirit. The Bible is not wholly Divine, nor is it wholly human. Like the Personal Revealer of God to man it is both. It is the Word of God, and also the Word of man. It has the perfections and qualities of its Divine character, but also the imperfections and qualities natural to all works of men. It is a Divine treasure contained in an earthen vessel. Positive proof of their twofold character will be supplied as we go on, meanwhile the analogy of the workings of the Spirit suggests to us that so it will be.

VI

PROOFS OF THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

WE believe that the Holy Scriptures are inspired by God, and when we say this we mean that they are inspired not merely as all noble human works are rightly said to be, but in a peculiar and special sense—inspired so that we are, through their guidance, to live the spiritual heavenly life whilst still on earth, and to attain to the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ in which Life Eternal consists. The question sooner or later has to be faced, “Why do we believe that the Scriptures are inspired?” It is plainly arguing in a circle to answer, Because they are the word of God. Nor is the answer, “Because they say they are inspired,” any more satisfactory. We are not wont to accept self-assertions without further inquiry. The Koran equally with the Bible claims inspiration for itself: why do we believe the one and not the other?

The reason to be derived from the history of our own spiritual life, and of that of mankind has been already referred to. We know the Bible to be Divine because it has nourished the Divine within us and our fellow-men. This is a sufficient reason

for any to give from a personal point of view. Some amongst men know in whom they have believed, and nothing whatever can shake their confidence that the book which told so effectively of Him was truly His. Experience is the invincible shield of Faith. But though this reason suffices for ourselves, it is, being of a subjective kind, well nigh incomunicable to others. Doubtless Christian lives, nourished on the Bible food, should recommend the Bible to others, and to some extent they do this. But Christian lives are imperfect at the best, and so lose much of their power to attract; and on the other hand it is not all men who are capable of appreciating the beauty of the Christian character. Spiritual beauty is spiritually discerned. It would seem that proofs of the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures appealing to men's minds rather than their spirits, or rather appealing to men's spirits through their minds, is what is required. We must look for facts which will arrest men's attention, and force them to inquire whether such things do not imply superhuman power and wisdom.

It must, however, be borne in mind that though we can give men a reason for the hope which is in us, we cannot prove to their intellects spiritual truths, and in particular the truth of the Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture. Proof is addressed to the human reason. Inspiration is not a natural but a spiritual truth. Spiritual truths are discerned by the spiritual and not by the natural powers. A man's reason cannot find out God, nor can it discern Him when found. Now it is to be feared that few men are deeply spiritual, *i.e.* could be rightly called spiritual

beings. Wholly unspiritual they may rarely be, but their spiritual powers, from want of education and use, are terribly deficient, and are not, most certainly, the dominant powers in their lives. Some will resent this assertion of deficiency in capacity ; such may be asked whether they would not admit that few men can establish their claim to the title of rational being. It is only in the few that reason, rather than custom, prejudice, or passion, rules. How many men are able to follow a course of reasoning, even when the different steps are few, easy, and plain ? Those who can discern a deficiency of reasoning power in their fellow-men, cannot deny that there may be a deficiency of another kind of power—spiritual power—in themselves. The blind man cannot discern the things of sight ; he does not, however, deny their existence, but acknowledges his own defects. The unreasoning man admits the existence of reasoning powers, but is probably unconscious of his own incapacity to reason. The unspiritual man, not discerning spiritual things, goes further than either, and denies their existence, and claims that they shall be made clear to him though he has no spiritual power and capacity. That surely is an unreasonable request. A man cannot see material sights unless he has eyes, a man cannot appreciate intellectual facts unless he has developed reasoning ; so a man cannot discern spiritual truths unless he has spiritual powers. Man is a composite being, and the possession of great powers in one of his different parts does not involve the possession of great powers in another. In practice the contrary is the rule. The disbelief of men possessed of great reasoning power is sometimes thought to tell strongly

against the truth of the Christian Faith. It would be as reasonable to assert that the denial or non-perception of the truths of science by great athletes discredited those truths. We have not been left without warning that the wise in the things of this world will not commonly be found to be rich in faith.

We confess, then, frankly, that it is impossible to prove the Inspiration of the Bible to the unbeliever ; he cannot appreciate the proof. But if men have a little faith, *i.e.* a little spiritual power, reasons can be given which will strengthen and support it. Traces of the Divine workings can be pointed out to them in the pages of the Bible.

There is a fact which all may recognize as differentiating the Bible from all other books. Regarding the Bible simply as literature, all can see that it differs from other literature in the way its writers see God everywhere. The Bible professes to be, as no other—even amongst sacred books—professes, the historical record of the meetings of the Creator and the creature—of God with man.

The Bible claims, I say, to be the record of the actual meetings, of the continuous dealings of God with man. We are apt to regard the Bible as concerned mainly with the future—the coming age and the future world. But it is concerned with the future, as wrapped up in the present. There are better things coming, but Israel and her prophets and her saints have not to wait for God's Presence. God is with men. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is described as an ever present Being, ruling in the midst of His people ; and in the New Testament, God has

visited His people—Emmanuel has come. It is the realization of the Divine immanence which differentiates the Old Testament prophets and writers from all other wise teachers of men. They see God everywhere. They are able to trace in all the crises of the national history, and in all the events of individual lives, the working of God. His handwriting is always upon the wall, and they can interpret it ; above all, they see His hand. In the New Testament, again, the Gospels supply to us the record of the earthly life of the Incarnate God, hence their pre-eminence amongst the books of the Bible. It is because the New Testament describes a closer union and communion between God and man in Jesus Christ that it is superior to the Old. It is because the New Covenant effects a closer union between God and man that it is a better covenant. The sum and substance of Revelation is expressed in those words of the Psalmist, “Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth ?” and yet more, “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill ; that He may set him,” not merely “with princes,” but “at His own right hand.” Or, to use New Testament language, “Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the consummation of the age.” “The Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” “The Tabernacle of God is with men.”

Now, why is it that the writers of the Old and New Covenants thus realize the Divine immanence, thus see God everywhere, and hold close communion with Him ? Our answer, as Christians, is because

they have that spiritual power by which they can see God. Here is a manifest fruit of the power which they claim for themselves—the Inspiration of the Spirit of God. The Koran claims for itself Inspiration; when we examine it, we find no proofs of its claim. It is different with the writers of the Bible. They plainly are possessed of a spiritual power which brings them into close touch with the unseen.

Of course we are liable to the retort that the Biblical writers were mistaken in thus seeing God everywhere. They were superstitious and fanatical some might say. Superstition and fanaticism are no uncommon things in any age, and they were specially common in the early days of the world's history.

It may be readily admitted that superstition and fanaticism are no uncommon things, but they never make those under their influence nobler and greater men. Now, it is certain—the fact is obvious to our reason—that the men of the Spirit, the real prophets and teachers of the Bible, were the noblest of their race and generation. They soar, indeed, so high above the ordinary people of their time that we wonder how they could have left their own people so far behind. Those who deny the truth of their religion cannot deny the purity of their morals and the nobility of their aims. We must put side by side the strength of these men, which is beyond question, and that which they tell us is the secret of their strength—the Divine Inspiration. The one accounts for the other. It would be strange indeed, if they became strong under the influence of

a lie. And we may add to what has been already said that the nation, Israel, though less consistently, is under a lower kind of the same influence. Old Testament history tells us this, that Israel is strong just so far as she recognizes God's presence in her midst. Can the secret of her strength have been vain imagination and false delusion? It should be observed also that it is a number of men, a line of men, a number of different men in very different circumstances, a whole nation, for hundreds of years of their history, who believed that God was present and working amongst men, and in particular amongst themselves. Now we can imagine a temporary madness passing over a people, and filling it with strength for a brief period. But the case is very different when you have a school of teachers interpreting facts on the same principles, able to show how former interpretations of former prophets and former recognitions of God's dealings had proved to be true. The claim of the prophets, that they see God and hear His voice, stands the test of time. Looking back on the history of the Jewish nation, we can hardly deny that their close relation with God (real or supposed) was the secret of their strength.

One of the results of the modern discoveries of the monuments and records of ancient nations is undoubtedly this: Israel, in many particulars, resembled the other nations much more closely than we have been wont to think. Further, God's dealings with her differed less widely from His dealings with them. We find laws very like the laws of Moses in the codes of the Babylonian kings, and ideas somewhat like the Messianic ideas in Babylonian writings

also. The Moabite Stone, it has been remarked, reads very like a chapter of The Kings. When Cyrus sent back the captive Jews to Jerusalem, and built their temple, he was not attracted by their pure religious ideas, nor had he been brought under any supernatural influence, he was simply following a policy which political motives sufficiently explain. But when we have fully admitted all this, we have still to account for the peculiar genius of Israel, and the remarkable influence she has exerted on the nations of the world. It seems to be proved to us more and more that Israel's pre-eminence consists not so much in God's dealings with her, which, ordinarily, at least, were substantially the same as with other nations,* but in the fact that she had men who were able to discern God's hand in every event of national or individual life. Whether we are reading history or prophecy, we find that a Divine cause is assigned for all that happens. The Jewish historian or prophet does not stop to record or consider earthly causes, he reckons them to be of no account. He is absorbed in the idea that God is working His righteous work upon the earth. Secondary causes, the use of the great empires of the world, Assyria, Babylonia, or Persia, the reigns of the great national kings, like those of the eighth century B.C.—in short, the political events which are of supreme importance to some minds, are not thought worthy of mention by him. He passes beyond these immediately to Him who ruleth in heaven and on the earth, believing that whatever is done upon the earth He is the doer of it. Whence comes this power

* The history of Israel is not continuously miraculous. Few miracles are recorded outside the periods of Moses, Elijah, and Daniel.

to see God everywhere, but from a Divine faculty of spiritual vision? It is God-given sight by which men see God. I say again, this intensity of spiritual vision is a strong proof of the inspiration of the Jewish writers, and, in a less degree, of the Jewish nation.

VII

PROOF FROM THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SIN

AS we have seen, the Bible claims, as no other sacred book claims, to be the historical record of the meetings of the Creator and the creature. Its writers claim, as no other writers do, to see God's workings. It is a very considerable substantiation of this claim, that their great theme is man's sin and its doing away. Who could see God in a fallen world and not see sin also? Who could know God as the Creator of all things—and as a God merciful and long suffering, and not hope that sin would be done away? Those who really see God must needs say what Job says, "Now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes ;" * or what Isaiah says, "Woe is me, for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts." † We may indeed say that the prophet's perception of sin in himself and his people is the test of the truth of his vision. The false prophet says, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." The true prophet knows God as the Righteous One whose name is Holy, and discerns

* Job xlvi. 5, 6.

† Isa. vi. 5.

with terrible distinctness, the national sins and their consequences. It is well worthy of note that it is the sins of the people of God, not the sins of the nations, which the prophets specially see. Numerous passages in the prophecies of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah testify to this. The Biblical writers also know what sin really is. It is reckoned to be alike a crime and a disease. The crime is capital and the disease infectious and deadly. It cannot be atoned for by material gifts. And sin pervades the whole human race and is incurable by any natural remedy. It separates man from his God, and so from the one source of light and life. It brings him under the sentence of death, bodily and spiritual. We Christians reckon ourselves to have advanced far beyond the men of the Old Covenant in our knowledge of Divine truth ; it would be well for us if we equalled them in their sense of the guilt and destructive power of sin.

We find of course developments in the later as compared with the earlier teachings of Revelation on the nature of sin. The patriarchs would seem to have been deficient in sense of it, though Joseph says, when tempted, " How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? " By the law came its knowledge, as St. Paul teaches, and by the Gospel a fuller knowledge still. The Prophets, spiritualizing former teaching, taught men its true nature, the Psalmists show how the Divine teaching had been assimilated by men's hearts. The life and death of Jesus Christ declare sin's exceeding sinfulness with unique power. Nevertheless the basis of the true doctrine was laid with precision in very early teachings of the Old Testament. The narrative of the Fall shows a

marvellous insight into sin's essential character, and declares with great completeness its relations to the Divine King and Judge, the human conscience, and to the whole Creation. Sin was not a part of Creation as made by God. It did not take its origin from man's material nature, or in an internal necessity of any kind. It was an act of his own free will. He voluntarily did that which he knew to be wrong. He set his own will against the declared will of God. Neither was it an external necessity which caused man to sin. The serpent was indeed more subtle than all the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made, and man had the simplicity of a child ; the temptation was strong, but man might have resisted it if he had so willed. The Fall was thus man's own act and not the serpent's. The narrative, therefore, establishes fully human responsibility ; man is left without excuse. Very full teaching concerning the consequences of sin is also given. It brings man under the Divine displeasure and separates him from his God. It causes disturbance and disorder both in man and the whole Creation besides. And then the narrative passes beyond sins, and tells, though in vague terms, of human redemption. The seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Thus the narrative of the Fall contains in itself a synopsis of the Divine Revelation. Human sin and Divine Grace would be its great theme. We notice that this teaching had been committed to writing (even according to the latest criticism) one hundred years or more before the Canonical prophets arose. It had been given no one can say how many centuries before. It is plain that Israel had

great nameless inspired teachers before the Prophets arose. It is noticeable that there are no certain explicit allusions to the narrative of the Fall in the Old Testament ; the fact shows that the argument from silence cannot be safely used on Old Testament matters. We can discern in the narrative of the Fall those particulars which differentiate the Biblical doctrine of sin from those of other religions. There is of course much in ancient heathen literature parallel to the Biblical teaching. No religion professed by man can be without its doctrine of sin. Every religion implies relations between God and man, and sin is the interruption of those relations. Religious rites, prayers and sacrifices, sometimes also spells and incantations, are the means used by man to restore friendly relations, *i.e.* to put away sin. So men of every religion acknowledge they are sinners, seek for forgiveness, are in fear of the Divine retribution in this world or in the next. But there is nothing which can be compared with the Biblical teaching as a whole. Sin is the refusal to give the Deity that which is His due ; but what is God, and what is His due ? The one God, says Revelation, is a Spirit and His requirements are spiritual. He asks for righteousness, purity, mercy, penitence of heart, from His worshippers. Sin is the withholding of these. But the heathen deities are commonly identified with the forces of nature, so they require natural products, the fruits of the earth, animal sacrifices. In the polytheistic systems there are gods who are patrons of the sensual desires, so they are worshipped in acts of cruelty and sensuality. That which is a sin according to Revelation, is an act of worship according to heathen

teaching. That which God hates, Baal and Ash-toreth expect; that which He desires not, they require. The polytheistic conception of sin is, therefore, immeasurably inferior, indeed directly contrary to the Biblical. Mohammedan morality is much nobler than the polytheistic, but it cannot be compared with the Biblical for this one sufficient reason—it leaves woman out of its code of morals.

But it would be unfair to judge non-Biblical conceptions of sin by the nature-worships and by Mohammedanism. There are higher teachings to be found. It is in the Assyrian and Babylonian Penitential Psalms that we have the nearest approach to the Biblical Psalms of Penitence and Confession. In these, men humble themselves before the Deity, acknowledge they have sinned, and fervently beg for a removal of the Divine displeasure. Dissolve my sin, my iniquity, they say, forgive my transgression, accept my supplication. Nevertheless, the true sense of guilt seems to be absent. Men do not feel they have done wrong, they only believe their god to be angry. "What have I done, it is asked, O my god, my goddess? As though I did not reverence my god and my goddess am I treated." It is change in the mind of the god, not cleansing of the heart and conscience, they require. So incantations are joined to the penitential prayers, and even the finest and purest appeals for Divine grace and mercy are called incantations. The penitence of the Hebrew and that of the Babylonian religions are two utterly different things.*

* See Jastrow, Art. "Religion of Babylonia" in Hastings' "Dictionary," additional volume, pp. 566, 567.

Again in the Egyptian religion we seem to have the clearest idea of retribution for sin.* It is differentiated most pointedly, says Rawlinson, from all other non-Christian systems in the stress that is laid upon the after-life. The worship of Osiris, judge of the dead, was the popular worship. The code according to which he gave judgment was a moral code. But there were great gaps in the Egyptian code of morality. The list of virtues was a short one. The Egyptian expected to be able to justify himself when standing before the tribunal of the dead. He would be able to protest, "I am pure." He could, like the Pharisee, keep all the commandments from his youth up. And if he had offended there was an elaborate ritual consisting of charms and prayers, by which, if said at the proper time or place, the dead man could escape the consequences of his transgression. It is plain that the Egyptian conception of sin was very imperfect.

It is possible that the ethical code of the Buddhist is the highest and purest of all the heathen codes. Gotama's teaching has many points of contact with the ethical teaching of Christ. But Buddhism is atheistic, so sin is not an act of disobedience and base ingratitude to God, it is simply a disturbance in human nature. There is nothing in Buddhism corresponding to the love of God which at once reveals sin, creates penitence in the sinner, and delivers him from sinful power. It is the experience of all Christians that they had not known and hated sin, had they not first known the love of God. The Buddhist not knowing God's love, cannot know sin as it is.

* Canon Rawlinson, Art. in "Non-Biblical Systems of Religion," p. 35.

In reading accounts of non-Biblical religions it is common to find remarks to the effect that the earlier simpler teachings had been overlaid by later superstitions. Doctrines of sin amongst the heathen were not capable of growth, they could not grow as men grew or adapt themselves to different circumstances. There was in them the seed of their own destruction. The Biblical doctrine, on the contrary, founded on the Hebrew doctrines of Creation and the Fall, is developed by later teachers, and is finally perfected by the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel alone reveals to man sin in its true nature and guilt, and the Gospel alone tells how man's sins can be done away. The teachers who discerned with special truth the character of the darkness must have been specially filled with Divine light. The teachers who regard sin as a pure and righteous God must needs look upon it must have been filled with the Spirit of God.

VIII

PROOF FROM THE HARMONY OF THE TEACHING

THE harmony of the Biblical teaching throughout is a clear indication of its Divine character. Men do not sufficiently appreciate the significance of the fact that all the different books of the Bible teach the same truths. They have been wont from long use to regard the Bible as one book, whereas it is a collection of many. Hundreds of years in times long past seem to us as no greater periods of time than tens in our own days, so we make little of the fact that thirteen hundred years at least separate Revelation's beginning from its end. We assume the fact of Inspiration, and then it becomes in no way wonderful that the words of God in one age of human history should agree with His words in another. What we should rather do is to regard the books of the Canon as separate books, to observe the great differences between them in regard to time, outward form, and even internal character, and then to consider what the secret of their harmony must be. It is because there are in Revelation many parts and many ways, it is because it is spread over so many different ages, it is because its human writers differed

so widely in character and circumstances and modes of thought, that we are led to the conclusion that its harmony and unity are Divine.

Josephus in his book against Apion * lays stress on the harmony of the teaching of the Jewish sacred books. We have not, he says, an innumerable multitude of books amongst us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another. It is one of the reasons for which it became natural for all Jews to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and if occasion be, willingly to die for them. The agreement of the prophets amongst themselves is a point often insisted on by the Christian Apologists. They contrast this with the wrangles between the different schools of Greek philosophers. But is there the harmony of teaching claimed? I suppose few would deny that a general harmony exists. There are of course differences in teaching. The writers do not all take the same note, but they all seem to write in the same key. The significance of the fact might be minimized by ascribing it to the work of late editors. But when all reasonable weight is given to this the agreement still remains remarkable. And special attention should be given to the particular character of the agreement or harmony. Harmony is not equivalent to identity, and is indeed incompatible with it. The teachings of the different Old Testament books are not identical. The later editors did not give them one voice and tone. It is recognized that the Old Testament embodies a progressive Revelation. The late editing has not made this fact obscure. The harmony of the writers of the Old Testament is

* Book i. c. 8.

the harmony of men who agree on fundamental principles. The first section of Genesis (i.-ii. 3) is regarded by the critics as late in date. However that may be, all Old Testament teachings take the substance of that section as the basis of their teaching. They are agreed, therefore, who and what God is, and what man is, and what are the relations of each to Creation. As man's knowledge and experience are enlarged, we find that a higher education is given him. He advances under the guidance of the prophets from laws to principle. His outlook widens, his ideas of God and of duty and of the kingdom of God are enlarged. Being a strong man he is no longer fed with food fit only for babes. It follows from what has been said that the unity of the Bible resembles the unity of a living creature—the unity which connects the youth of life with its old age, so that the child is the father of the man. No doubt there is closer agreement amongst the teachings of the Koran, than amongst the books of the Bible, but the unity of the Koran is the unity of a single human mind, expressing itself always in the same outward forms. The unity of the Bible is the far more subtle and wonderful unity of many minds and of many forms. Such unity cannot be manufactured. Unity with an entire absence of uniformity cannot be attributed to design.

And it must be remembered that we can find a more wonderful unity in our Bible than Josephus found in his Old Testament. The relations between the teachings of the Old and New Testament are peculiarly instructive. Some might say that the Old Testament is superseded by the New; the truth rather

is that the New Testament is the fulfilment of the Old. Undoubtedly, much of the Old Testament passes away when the Gospel is preached. But this takes place in every natural and true fulfilment. Many things fall off from flowers and fruits, their use being over, in different stages of their growth. It is a simple fact that the New Testament is unintelligible without the Old. Those heretics who threw aside the Old Testament misunderstood the New. And on the other hand the Old Testament is the first volume in an incomplete book. The New Testament gives the sequel which the Old Testament demands. Irenæus says the Gospel was fourfold, but that it was held together by one Spirit. It would be equally true to say that the Bible is manifold, but that one Spirit breathes in it all. Knowing as we do the conflicting voices of human teachers, knowing besides that conflict in religious teaching is wont to be peculiarly sharp and severe, knowing also the constant change in human opinions, the unity of teaching to be traced in the widely separated writers of the Bible is a proof of Divine Inspiration.

IX

PROOF FROM THE PURITY OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

A NOTHER proof of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is to be found in the purity of their teaching. The Bible is unique amongst sacred books, because it contains very little teaching, comparatively, which is not of the highest and noblest morality.

A statement so guarded and limited in its language will, perhaps, be startling to many. They will ask, "Is there anything, can there be anything, lower than the best in the Inspired Word of God?" And yet is not the standard of right in the New Testament higher than in the Old? There are precepts in the Law which were given because of the hardness of Israel's heart. Israel, in Old Testament times, was not capable of the highest and noblest morality, and the Law recognizes, and to some extent legalizes, existing facts. The law says, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." This is an immoral precept, which Christ has done away. The spirit of the Law is embodied in the words, "Thou shalt hate thine enemy," and this is contrary to the Spirit of Christ.

Christian people could not rightly obey many of the commands given by God to the Israelites, nor can

they rightly use all the verses of the Psalms. To say that every teaching in Holy Writ must be the very noblest and best is to obstinately shut our eyes to these facts. It is to determine on *a priori* principles what God's methods and dealings must have been, and to disregard the teaching of that Book, which describes them as they actually were. It is, in our loyalty to the Bible, to give less than our full loyalty to truth.

With these necessary deductions, the fact remains that the Holy Scriptures throughout are remarkably free from impure and unworthy teaching. Had the different books been written at one time, or conformed to one model, or even edited by one mind, this would not have been very surprising, but they belong to many generations, and are of many different kinds, and are the works of teachers differing widely in their thoughts and circumstances. Israel herself was a nation of low civilization and morality, and never, before the Babylonian Captivity, assimilated the lessons she was divinely taught. The materials which her teachers worked up into her sacred books must have been full of the corruptions natural to rude and primitive times and nations. A book so composite, so mixed, we might say, in many ways, might have been expected to be of mixed morality and value. Mixture, in these respects, is not denied. Not all books of the Bible are equally lofty in their teaching, or of the same moral and spiritual value. But it cannot be said of the Bible, as it can of all other sacred books, that stories and passages, which are puerile or grotesque, or superstitious, and even immoral, are mixed up with

narratives or teachings of great beauty and truth. It is the words of the Lord that are pure words. It will be well to trace the unique purity of the Bible with some detail. Comparing the Canonical Scriptures with the Apocryphal, we find, in the latter, passages worthy, if we may venture to say so, of a very high place amongst the former. Not without the Spirit of God were these written. On the other hand, there are to be found in the Apocrypha incredible stories, passages which do not tend to edification, or which ring a false note. Heathen sacred literature contains much grosser corruptions. To take examples: by judiciously selecting passages, it would be possible to prove that the Egyptian conception of the nature and attributes of God was in no way inferior to the Hebrew; but side by side with these are statements concerning the Deity which startle and shock the devout mind.* Some, again, of the teaching in the Vedas is highly elevated in its character; but it is "found, when taken as a whole, to abound more in puerile ideas than in striking thoughts and lofty conceptions."† The Babylonians, to take another instance, mixed together in their worship, incantations, and penitential psalms.‡ The absence of all such lower elements in the Bible is very remarkable.

And we may take, as a conspicuous instance of this, the freedom of the earliest books of the Bible from grotesque legend and mythology. What story

* Rawlinson, "Non-Biblical Systems of Religion," p. 29.

† "Hinduism" (S.P.C.K.), by Prof. Monier Williams, p. 31.

‡ Hastings' "Dictionary," extra vol., "Religion of Babylonia," p. 567.

of Creation, save only that of the Bible, does not disgust us with some absurdities and monstrosities? One cannot doubt that the people of Israel had, like every other ancient nation, its folk-lore, its mythological stories about the origin of the world and man. And from what we know of natural Israel, these stories would not transcend in wisdom and truth the similar stories current amongst other nations. And yet the Bible is wonderfully free from them. The nearest approach to them in the Bible is the story of the intercourse of the sons of God with the daughters of men, for which, perhaps, no satisfactory explanation has been found. The stories of the formation of woman, and of the Fall, can hardly be literal history, and may have a mythical basis, but both enshrine with marvellous beauty and dignity and naturalness the highest spiritual truths. The narratives of the patriarchs, and other early Israelites, again, are said by some critics to have a mythical character, but the "impossible" element is absent, and they are incomparable with ordinary myths. If not true history, they have, at least, a likeness to truth.

And if we would rightly appreciate the significance of these facts, we must not only bear in mind the early times in which these narratives originated, and the uncultivated character of the Jewish nation, but we must, even more, compare the lives of the Biblical teachers with their teachings. The lower elements of morality are much more conspicuous in the one than the other. Some of the critics would not allow us to compare David's life with David's Psalms, for they deny that he was the author of any of them, but the mixture of the spiritual and the

carnal in David is very remarkable, and he was, it will be admitted, the Israelite indeed of his day and generation. We seemed forced to believe that Israel's teachers and writers were endued for the purpose of writing the sacred books with a special Divine power.

The illustrations of the "purity" of the Biblical teaching already given have been taken from the Old Testament; but it can be abundantly illustrated from the New. The same influence which removed the grotesque and the unnatural and the unworthy from the Old Testament narratives purified the Gospels and made them suitable for the high objects for which their writers designed them, and it may well be for objects higher still.

It is plain from St. Luke's Preface to his Gospel that many lives of Jesus Christ had been written in his time. Many, he says, took in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled amongst us. Most of these have perished, but some survive. We have a number of what are called Apocryphal Gospels. Now it is very remarkable that there is scarcely a noble word or deed of Jesus Christ which is not known to us through the four Canonical Gospels. It is remarkable also that there is very little in them which involves us in any moral difficulty—anything which is a stumbling-block to us as being seemingly unworthy of Jesus Christ. The cursing of the fig tree and the destruction of the swine in the lake are perhaps the most remarkable instances of what may be called moral difficulties in the actions of our Lord. But when we pass to the Apocryphal Gospels the case is changed. There are many deeds ascribed to Jesus Christ,

especially in His youth, which are utterly unworthy of Him, and which would, if they came to us with authority, be grievous stumbling-blocks to our faith in Him. There must have been numerous such false or exaggerated or garbled stories current about our Lord in the early days, and the wonder is that all these are excluded from the Gospels. Thus we discern in the Gospels traces of that Divine Inspiration which enabled the Evangelists rightly to select their facts—to distinguish not only between the true and the false, but between the worthy and the unworthy, the suitable and unsuitable. There was a crowd of facts before them, and great discrimination was required. St. John, speaking of the many other things which Jesus did, not recorded in his Gospel, supposes that if they should be written every one, not even the world itself would contain the books that should be written. And besides the things which Jesus did there must inevitably have been ascribed to Him, as at His trial before Annas, words and deeds which were not His. How can we fail to see the work of the Spirit of God in the Evangelist's wonderful discernment of facts?

It is this kind of Inspiration to which Dr. Liddon has given the name of the "Inspiration of Selection." He remarks in a sermon preached one Whitsunday,* that if history be the faithful record of facts, the function of inspiration in history must be limited to the grouping of facts, to the assigning to certain facts a relative prominence, above all, to the selection out of a large number of facts those which illustrate a

* See "Anglican Pulpit Library," Whitsunday to the 9th Sunday after Trinity, pp. 18-21.

particular aspect of higher truth. He goes on to observe that this faculty of judicious selection is higher and rarer than may be at first supposed. To select wisely out of an embarrassingly large assortment of facts and thoughts, requires a combination of penetration and resolve, in order to perceive what is really worth preserving, and to resist the seductions of what is not. Without this gift one writer will bury his true purpose beneath a mass of ill-selected and undigested details; while another will not exhibit details sufficient to give his subject the body and outline which it demands. Such books may have many merits but they lack the inspiration of selection.

Now contrast with this the work of the Holy Spirit in the composition of the Gospels. The supernatural is always haunted by its counterfeit; but the Holy Spirit at once swept aside a mass of legends such as are handed down to us in a somewhat later shape by the New Testament Apocryphal literature. Nay, more, He took only some of the true words and acts of Christ. Christians might well believe that no acts or words of the Son of God during His earthly life could have been without high import of some kind. But they were not all equally useful for the specific purposes of the several evangelists. Each Gospel bears trace of being a selection from a larger assortment of materials; the last says expressly that there are many other things which Jesus did, and which the evangelist had not recorded. Each writer having clearly before him that aspect of the life of Jesus which it was his task to illustrate, whether Messianic, or human, or redemptive, or Divine, traverses with this object the stores of his own

memory, or the recitals and reports of other eye-witnesses, and records just so much as is needed for his purpose. Each fulfils the prediction—"He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

Dr. Liddon remarks that the same principle of selection, although it is differently applied, meets us in the Apostolical Epistles, and further that it was not a new procedure of the Spirit in the Apostolical age. He did then what he had done in ages before the Incarnation. The prophets by whom He spake were the leading rulers, statesmen, and historians who were intrusted with the guidance of the people of Revelation. And the records of their work, as the authors of the historical books tell us, were largely compiled out of documents already in existence. The Spirit takes now and again from the conglomerate mass of early traditions or records, and shews them in a new and inspired combination to His ancient people. It is not only traditions and materials of the chosen people which the Holy Spirit thus selects, but those of imperfect and false systems. Whatever is true in the earlier history and thought of our race is Christ's, that is to say it is the teaching of the Eternal Word. Being His, the Holy Spirit takes of it and shows it to man.

It will be observed that Dr. Liddon's words go somewhat beyond the purpose for which they have been quoted; the inspiration of selection not only gives purity to the sacred writings, but efficiency for the special purposes. It is not merely true facts but the right facts which the inspired writers use.

X

PROOF FROM THE ABIDINGNESS OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

THE abidingness of the teaching of the Bible is another indication of its Inspiration by the Holy Spirit of God. What is the Old Testament? It is not unfair to describe it as the literary remains of the children of Israel or Jewish nation. What was the Jewish nation? A nation of third-rate importance, numerically few but occupying an important position in the south-western corner of Asia. There were many nations in Old Testament times more civilized and more important from every natural point of view. The Jews excelled in none of those qualities which made the Babylonians, Greeks, or Romans prime factors in the history of man. We might almost say that the one abiding product of Judaism is its Book. It would be wholly true to say that the power which made the book of the Jews, is the only power belonging to the Jewish people of important influence in the world. That book beyond doubt abides—abides in active power. It has exercised and is exercising an influence on the race of man with which nothing else—no other book, and no other force in Creation, can compare. When we study it we find to

our surprise this cosmopolitan power in a book which is essentially national, in some respects, we might say, narrowly national. The Jew makes himself a citizen of the world, but he holds himself aloof from the world in which he dwells, and his book naturally possesses something of his own character. Moreover, the greatest of Old Testament books were written before the Jews had ceased to dwell alone within the narrow limits of their land. It would be reasonable to presume that a book of the narrow Jew carried within itself the elements of its own decay ; that a Jewish book could not be generally useful and therefore could not abide. Such presumptions are we know falsified by the facts. The Old Testament (for only this part of the Bible is being referred to here) is the lesson book of the civilized world. It has the rare and surpassing excellence of being the lesson-book of all, whether wise or unwise, educated or uneducated. It is the delight of the aged and of little children alike. It has a word for men in all the circumstances of their life. Its surpassing merits are freely acknowledged by those who do not accept its distinctive teaching. Its writers, whatever they are—and they are not all of one kind—have the marvellous power of using the passing events and circumstances of the history of their nation to embody the great and spiritual and moral truths which never pass away. Why does the history of Israel live ? Why is it better known than any other history by the many and studied with greater perseverance and anxiety by the few ? Most certainly not because of its intrinsic political importance. The body survives because of the living spirit within. Israel as a nation

was never great, and has long ceased to exist ; Israel as a teacher of moral and spiritual truth stands alone amongst the nations ; there is none beside her.

It will be worth while to illustrate this fact, viz. the abidingness of the teaching of the Bible, in detail, not only because of its importance, but because it is easy for men who are not believers in Revelation to appreciate it. Not believing in the Divine Inspiration of the Bible, they have to account for it on rational and non-spiritual grounds. The Ten Words said to be given to the children of Israel on Mount Sinai are, as all critics allow, a very ancient code of laws. Many critics trace them to a Mosaic source. They are now more than three thousand years old, but they remain the foundation of all Christian and most civilized morality. The Ten Words are elementary rules and require Christian development and interpretation, but they need no expurgation. They are a working code. If the world obeyed them all the world would be much the better, and this the world would allow. The wisdom of the fourth commandment is acknowledged by everybody. Man needs one day in seven for a rest. The dangers of image worship would be acknowledged even by Agnostics. Polytheism is incomparably inferior to Monotheism ; if there be a God, there can be only one. That law-giver was in advance of his times who commanded men to honour their mothers equally with their fathers. The Ten Words abide in moral force, and there is good reason that they should. Again, the relation between man and woman—the relation which experience teaches mankind as the true relation, is that laid down in the early document which comes to us in the

second chapter of Genesis. Israelites commonly did not act up to the teaching given there, and indeed the principle of the equality of the sexes is far from being universally realized in our own times. The fact that the teaching was given so long ago is thus made more forcible for our purposes. It had an abidingness in it which generations of hostile action could not destroy. It may be less important, but not wholly insignificant that the Bible stories never lose their power to attract, and that the history of Israel still gives wise lessons as to the causes of prosperity and decay in nations. It is remarkable that we sing almost daily, psalms which give details of Israel's history and never think they are no concern of ours. The devotional psalms, composed as they necessarily must have been by particular men to suit particular occasions in their own or in the national life—how is it that they furnish us with abiding expressions of the various feelings of our own hearts? The prophets continue to be the recognized teachers of the principles of righteousness in every age of the world's history, albeit the principles they teach were not the principles current in their own times. They did not claim to be teachers for all time. They were interested in the special national crises in their own days. Their denunciations, exhortations, advice had reference to the immediate present. Nevertheless their words have an abiding value. When we consider the New Testament, we do not think it wonderful that the records of the Divine-human life should abide in their interest and power. The beginning of the great kingdom of heaven must needs also continue to interest those who are its citizens, and many more

besides. But how is it that the teaching of the Epistles abides? They were in their purpose essentially partial and temporary, composed to meet the particular wants of particular Churches, written on the spur of the moment as the messenger was available or the occasion demanded. The Churches to whom they were written consisted only of handfuls of new converts of little importance in the world's esteem, suffering from those difficulties which arise from defective and immoral education and from a want of historical influence. We should not have *a priori* imagined that letters so written would have been of permanent value. And yet we know that the Epistles were not more highly valued and more carefully studied in the early days than in our own. There must, we infer, have been some Divine power at work which made letters written to particular Churches at particular crises œcumenical Epistles to the Church of all time. The Apostles, it is clear, were not consciously addressing the whole Body of Christ. It is the merits of the writings themselves which has given them their abiding value. Now what is it which gives permanence to human words? Everything that is human naturally passes away. We answer that the thing which abides partakes in a peculiar degree of the character of the Eternal God. It is the Word of the Lord which abideth for ever.

XI

PROOF FROM THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

A VERY remarkable argument for the Inspiration of the Bible, and more especially the Old Testament part of it, is to be derived from the Jewish nation itself. The Jewish nation cannot be separated from its book. The book is at once the record and the manifestation of the life of the nation. The life of the nation is derived from the teaching contained in the book. The Bible is the one great achievement of the Jewish nation, and it contains the secret of its unique influence on humanity. The book indicates that the Jews came under a special education fitting them to be the teachers of mankind in spiritual truth. This special spiritual teaching is what we call the Divine Inspiration. An English king once asked a bishop to give him a proof of the truth of the Divine Revelation in a nutshell. "The Jews, your Majesty," was the reply. It was an admirable answer for many reasons, and perhaps chiefly for this: the Jews, after the flesh, had not the capacity to make the record of Revelation contained in the Bible.

It is clear there was nothing in the origin of the Jewish nation to suggest that it would take such a

distinguished part in the history of men. The religion of Abraham's ancestors was not a survival of some particularly pure form of primitive religion, if, indeed, we may assume that any primitive religion was pure. "Your fathers," says Joshua, "dwelt on the other side of the river, and served strange gods." "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," says the prophet Ezekiel. Abraham was indeed the rock from which they were hewn, and faithful Abraham was doubtless a noble ancestor. Probably, however, he would not have appeared to advantage in some important particulars if he could have been placed beside his contemporary, the Babylonian king Hammurabi. However this may be, Abraham was reckoned to be the father of Edomites, Midianites, and Arab tribes as well—nations of small account; Moab and Ammon and Syria also were accounted to be descendants of Abraham's brothers. Whether this is literally true or not, we may safely reckon all these nations to be cognate with Israel. It is certain they differed comparatively little in land, or mode of life, or political power. But what does any one of them, or all of them together, bring into the treasury of mankind? Their interest to man depends simply and solely on their connection with the Jews. Now, we have a right to require a reason for the fact that the Jews were at once so like and so unlike to their neighbours and relations. M. Renan's suggestion that nomad life was the secret of religious power breaks down when it is applied indiscriminately to the nations of Western Asia. Plainly the Jews and their neighbours belonged originally to the same type of humanity. We have not, indeed,

much historical literature of the latter with which to compare the Bible ; but we have the Moabite Stone. The religious ideas of the Moabites in Ahab's time were plainly very similar to those of the contemporary Israelites, and were expressed in similar words and images. We must frankly admit that it is not very easy to discern any great superiority of the chosen people over their neighbours during the greater part of the Old Testament times. They were only beginning—the better part of them—to be different. The seeds of higher things were being sown, but they had produced no general harvest. The nations could not fall into grosser sins than those of which we read in the days of the Judges. Their kings could not offend more grievously against the principles of righteousness than David, who is the ideal Israelite king. From a secular point of view, Israel might be regarded as a negligible quantity save for the strategical importance of her country. She must go to Tyre for the arts and sciences, her craftsmen and her shipmen. Solomon must get from thence his architect and his skilled workmen, and Hiram's sailors must go along with his. One fancies that Sidonian Jezebel was somewhat contemptuous of her adopted country. Anyhow, Israel woke up when she was on the throne. Again, Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon regarded Israel as their humble friend, or, if not, as their despised foe, to be brushed away like a fly when the opportunity came. "I will deliver thee two thousand horses if thou be able, on thy part, to set riders upon them," expresses admirably the Assyrian contempt. Syria of Zobah and Damascus was generally Israel's equal in

strength. Even the Philistines, though occupying only the south-west corner of her land, made the Israelites for many years their helpless slaves.

But when we have depreciated the character of national Israel as thoroughly as we ought and as we can, then we have all the greater difficulty in accounting for Israel's influence on mankind. That influence has a depth and permanency incomparably greater than that of any other nation. We can place two, and only two nations, side by side with her—Greece and Rome. Both, we may remark, were her conquerors for a time. Both she has brought under her permanent dominion. The wisdom of Greece, the organized power of Rome, and the religion of Israel are the three great forces which have made the human race what it now is. And there can be little doubt that the influence of Israel is incomparably the greatest of the three. Greece has given the wise man his thought, and Rome has given civilized nations their organization ; but Israel has given the wise and the foolish, the civilized and the uncivilized, their God to worship, their ideal of righteousness, their rule of life, and their sure hope of immortality.

We observe, when we compare the great world forces together, that Israel's is the earliest of the three. Israel's religion had reached its distinctive principles, though not its final development, in the eighth century B.C.—the traditional century of the foundation of Rome. Isaiah and Romulus were contemporaries. The earliest Greek teachers come two centuries later ; Socrates and Plato are a century later still. It is worth while noticing these facts, because they prove that it is not to a development in

human thought that we can ascribe Israel's religious power. We observe, also, that the forces of Greece and Rome are the forces of natural man—human wisdom and human power. Israel is lacking in both. Hers is not the wise head or the strong arm. But she has given the civilized world her conceptions of God and of duty. It is to be remarked that she has not given the world its religious forms, but that much greater gift—its religious principles. The forms of Israel's religion as found in the law of Moses have perished. It is spiritual power, purely spiritual power, in which Israel is pre-eminent.

Now, how does she get her spiritual power? Whatever positive answer may be given we may certainly say that she does not get it in the way of natural development. The Old Testament witnesses that there is a power from without and from above working upon her; a power which disciplines and chastises her, and purifies her religious conceptions and ideals. This power she fully acknowledges, and yet she generally resists it. Israel is not allowed to go on her own way. Hardly, through most of the Old Testament, does she attempt to reach her ideals. She hardens her heart against her teachers. Her law, whatever we may take it to be, is habitually flouted. She disobeys the Priestly Code with no greater consistency than the Ten Words. She has a God peculiarly her own—the God who brought her out of the land of Egypt and gave her the goodly land He had promised to her fathers. But she is never, till after her exile in Babylon, faithful in her allegiance to Him. The prophets indeed give one the idea that Israel was less faithful to her true God

than the nations to their false ones. "Pass over," says Jeremiah, "to the isles of Kittim and see ; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there hath been such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods ? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit."* God's deliverances and chastisements seem to have had no effect on His people for hundreds of years. What a pitiful spectacle does the remnant in Egypt present when they maintained that all their misfortunes have come from ceasing to make cakes and burn incense to the queen of heaven !†

Israel's spiritual influence is thus not a natural product of Israel's stock. If it had been we should have expected the cognate nations which lived around her, and in lands like hers, to have it too. Isaiah complains that the vineyard of his Beloved's planting and care brings forth wild grapes only. How, then, did her spiritual powers come ? The Old Testament is very clear as to the secret of her power. Israel has specially close communion with God. God's Presence is vouchsafed to her and goes with her. She has found grace in God's sight. That was one of her earliest and her strongest traditions. Amos, when he says in God's Name, " You only have I known of all the families of the earth," says what every Israelite firmly believed. The words of Moses found in a very early part of the Pentateuch‡ are very remarkable. " Wherein," he asks, " shall it be known that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight ? Is it not in that Thou goest with us, so that we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that

* Jer. ii. 10.

† Jer. xliv. 17, 19.

‡ Exod. xxxiii. 16.

are upon the face of the earth ? ” God’s Presence is thus reckoned to be Israel’s distinctive privilege. This same truth is, also, clearly taught in the patriarchal narratives. The word of blessing to Abraham repeated to him and his children on several occasions, is the charter of Israel’s birth, or stronger still, the very begetting of the people of God. “ I will bless thee and make thee great. I will be with thee,” God says. The history from end to end is regarded as the accomplishment of this initial promise. God is in the midst of Israel. The Lord of Hosts is with her, the God of Jacob is her refuge.

The critics would not, of course, allow us to assume that these words were actually said to Abraham, but they allow that they are contained in the earliest portions of Genesis. It is indeed remarkable that all these occurrences are found in the earliest portions. There is nothing corresponding to these in the latest. Hence they represent a very early tradition amongst the children of Israel. Israel from her earliest days reckoned herself to be the blessed of the Lord. And how was Israel blessed ? There can be only one answer to this question. Not in her land, though it was goodly ; not in her wide dominion, for it is no far cry from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt ; not in her wisdom, for she had none of the worldly kind : Israel’s only speciality is her knowledge of and communion with God. The secret of that knowledge and communion was her only peculiar treasure.

Now, it is not uncommon for nations in their pride to imagine that they are the objects of God’s special favour. Every nation in olden times thought

itself the favourite of its own god. But there is something distinctive in the nature and tenure of Israel's Divine blessing. The patriarchal narratives, when they declare Abraham's seed the blessed of the Lord, invariably add that she is blessed so that by means of her all nations of the world may be blessed too. "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."* It is thus one of Israel's earliest traditions that she was chosen by God to exert spiritual power and influence—chosen, that is to say, to do the very thing which we know she has done. This, it is clear, is no *vaticinium post eventum*. Abraham's seed is destined to her high office hundreds of years before she attempted to fill it. Abraham himself and his immediate descendants are never recorded to have done any missionary work. The Judges were not qualified to instruct even their own people. It is never said of Samuel and David and Solomon that they attempted to spread the knowledge of the true God. Not even in the best Israelites is the missionary spirit to be discerned. Most certainly Israel from her entry into Canaan up to the Babylonian Exile is not a missionary nation. She fully believes that she is the blessed of God; she is in no way conscious that it is her duty to hand on His blessing to others. It is not till the days of the later Isaiah—not, that is, till the years of the Babylonian Captivity were drawing to their close—that any Israelite seems to realize fully his nation's office in the world. The idea of a universal kingdom of God had indeed been conceived in

* If the translation "bless themselves" be preferred the meaning is hardly altered.

earlier times.* If there was but one God there could be only one religion and worship. The earlier Isaiah represents the nations as going up to Zion to learn the knowledge of Jehovah and of His ways. But it is to a much later prophet we owe the description of Israel as God's servant, commissioned by Him to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be His salvation unto the ends of the earth. Hundreds of years had passed by before the purpose of God for Israel, as expressed in the patriarchal narratives, was assimilated even by her greatest teachers. And even then hundreds of years were added before Israel fulfilled God's purpose to any considerable extent.

Do not these facts compel us to believe that flesh and blood did not reveal Israel's office to her—that it was not a product of Israel's heart and brain, but that it was an inspiration—a Divine idea communicated to her—a seed sown in her heart and lying dormant for hundreds of years until at last it sprung up and bore fruit? And how rich and noble was the fruit borne at last! How marvellously did Israel fulfil her Divine vocation! Israel has been in a manner transcending Old Testament thought, God's light to the world, and God's salvation to all men. Spite of her patent desire to keep her God and her blessing to herself; spite of that separate spirit, we see predominant amongst the returned exiles men like Ezra, Nehemiah, and others; spite of her very self, we might say, she diffused the knowledge of God in all the chief centres of population in the Roman Empire before her Christ came. And then

* I.e. from the eighth century B.C. onwards.

the synagogue became the seed-bed of the Christian Church, and the first sowers therein were all Jews.

It is marvellous to see how the whole matter hangs together. Very early in her history Israel is designated for a spiritual office. She did not take that office on herself, for she had neither capacity nor wish to fill it. For tens of generations, though in God's school, she is a pupil who will not learn her own lessons. Though conscious of God's favour she does not realize God's purpose, and makes no effort to do His work. At length a few of the nobler sort began to understand what God would have Israel be. By the force of political events she is banished to her places of service. Her own religious needs compel her to establish her worship in heathen countries. Without desiring it, she attracts by the purity of her religious teaching Gentiles who are seeking after God. Then come the Jewish Apostles publishing the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, for all men. They speak first to the Jews, but the Jews reject the message and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life.* Then they turn to the Gentiles: "For so," say they, "hath the Lord commanded us. I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." It is said of the English nation that it has acquired its world-wide Empire in a fit of absence of mind. Surely we may say that the Catholic kingdom of heaven has been set up by Jews without previous intention or design. It is not the Jewish spirit which is at work; it is the Divine purpose, which

* Acts xiii. 46, 47.

is accomplished by the power of the Divine Spirit. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The close bearing of the history of the Jews on the Inspiration of the Bible will be clearly seen in the light of the following three great facts:—

(1) Israel cannot account for the Bible, *i.e.* the Bible is not one of her natural fruits; it is not such a book as we should expect to come from such a nation. Its statements and teachings are above her and beyond her. She does not digest them till hundreds of years after they were uttered.

But (2) the Bible does account for Israel. We see a nation of no great power, mental or spiritual, under God's special and continual education. God forms Israel, we might say, out of the common dust of the ground, but He breathes into her nostrils the breath of life—Divine Life, Spiritual Life, that knowledge of Himself which is Eternal Life; then He gives her the power and the opportunity to communicate that life to the other nations of the world.

But also (3) all were not Israel who are of Israel, and the Bible accounts for the failure of Israel after the flesh to realize the Divine purposes. It was clearly stated in the beginning that she was the special object of God's favour, because He had chosen her for His special service. Violating the conditions of tenure she forfeited her inheritance. As she, *i.e.* her nobler remnant, became what God said she would if she was faithful, so she has become what God said she would become if she was faithless. The book of the Jews and the history of the world thus correspond the one to the other, and each interprets the other.

History records the fact and the Bible explains the secret of the Jews' marvellous influence on mankind.

There is another proof of Israel's Divine Inspiration which must be briefly referred to. What is the cause of Israel's life, her unconquerable life, her separate life? How is it that she, though always crushed between the millstones of the world's power, still survives? The only reason seems to be, her grasp on God's promises to her, her firm though narrow and even wrongful grasp. When she loses that grasp she mingles among the heathen and learns their works, she loses her individuality, she is absorbed and lost. Where are the ten tribes? Their calves and idolatries neutralized the Divine life within them, and they ceased to maintain their separate existence. Judah, more faithful, or rather, the more faithful in Judah, continued to exist, and for this reason: because they had within them a life of which the world did not know. The vitality of the Jewish nation at the time of our Lord is very remarkable. Wrongly directed, it bubbles over and is wasted in sectarian quarrels and financial insurrections against the irresistible might of Rome. Rightly directed, it inspires the Apostles and early Christians and enables them to conquer the world.

XII

PROOF FROM COMPARISON OF THE RELIGIONS OF BABYLON AND THE BIBLE

WE have already compared together Israel, Greece, and Rome—those three nations which, by their special gifts, may be said to be the makers of mankind in its latter days. We have pointed out, also, that contrary to all natural expectation, Israel's influence is incomparably the greatest of the three. But there is another nation with which it will be advisable to compare Israel in considerable detail—the great ancient world-power of Babylon, with which, for our purposes, Assyria may be combined. The comparison will have greater value, because we shall be comparing nations of the same kind. Nations of the East and Eastern nations differing very widely from Western have many common characteristics ; cognate nations, for Babylon is partially, and Assyria is wholly Semitic in origin ; contemporaneous nations, also, for many hundreds of years, though Babylon long precedes Israel, and Israel long survives Babylon. And there is another and a stronger reason than any of those named. Babylon was the cradle of the Hebrew race, and gave to her those first ideas which have so much to do with the formation of children and nations alike. Babylon was indeed a tree in

whose shadow all the nations of Western Asia lodged. She was the home of all Eastern art and civilization. Professor Friedrich Delitzsch describes her as the focus of culture and science and literature, the "brain" of the Nearer East, and the all-ruling power.* Even as early as the close of the third millennium, B.C., the Tel-El-Amarna tablets "prove the all-ruling influence of the Babylonian culture and literature from 2200 to beyond 1400 B.C. When the twelve tribes of Israel entered Canaan, they came to a land which was a domain completely pervaded by Babylonian culture."† It is quite clear that Babylon had much to do with the making of Israel.

The Bible puts Israel and Babylon over against one another. They are kingdoms of a different kind. Israel is the kingdom of heaven, and Babylon is the typical kingdom of the world. Babylon is the head of Nebuchadnezzar's image, and Israel is the stone cut out without hands which breaks that image to pieces, and becoming a great mountain, covers the whole earth.‡ As gold transcends stone, so does Babylon transcend Israel in worldly power. But Israel has a Divine Spirit within her to which Babylon is a stranger. Babylon's soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the just—the true Israelite—shall live by his faith.§

Professor Delitzsch has further pointed out how much Babylon is doing for the elucidation and illustration of the Bible.|| This may be freely admitted, though his language is somewhat exaggerated. It is

* "Babel and Bible," Crown Theological Library, p. 38.

† Ibid., pp. 38, 39. ‡ Dan. ii. 35. § Hab. ii. 4.

|| In his lectures on "Babel and Bible."

not of intense importance to the Biblical student to be assured that there is such a place as Cuthah ; * nor is it a "great service" to him to be taught the exact shape of the wild ox or unicorn (A.V). The likeness, also, between Babylonian and Biblical ideas and laws is very considerable, though not perhaps so close as Professor Delitzsch thinks. Mr. S. A. Cook † thinks that Israelite legislation was not to any considerable extent indebted to Babylonia. Mr. Johns seems to think that the Babylonian connection with Biblical legislation is in the main indirect. He says, "There is no need to speak of borrowing (from Babylon) as an act on the part of Israelite legislators." Still, he sums up his article on the code of Hammurabi by saying, "The presumption that Babylonia had a prominent influence on Palestine long before Israelite codes were drawn up, is one that grows stronger as time goes on." ‡ To our mind it is a matter of small importance, from a theological point of view, whether Babylon's influence on Israel was great or comparatively small. The fact of importance is, that Israel emancipated herself from that influence, purified herself from its manifold corruptions, conceived noble ideas (and what is more practised them) in regard to God and man, which never entered into the heart of any Babylonian, or if they did, never became in the smallest degree ruling ideas in Babylonian life. Professor Delitzsch's remark, "How utterly alike everything is in Babylon and Bible," § is a gross caricature

* "Babel and Bible," pp. 152, etc.

† "The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi," p. 281.

‡ Hastings' "Dictionary," extra vol., p. 612.

§ "Babel and Bible," p. 175.

of the truth. If future discoveries should multiply the resemblances between Babylon and the Bible, it would still be true that the Babylonian religious thought is essentially different from that of the Bible. Recent discoveries have shown the existence of much Babylonian material in some of the Biblical writings. They have shown, also, that the Babylonian spirit is utterly opposed to the Biblical.

The resemblances are external and superficial ; the differences are fundamental. The excavations have illustrated the Bible's outward form, they have thrown light on its words, animals, kings, cities, etc. ; but who would say that they have given us a new revelation, or increased man's spiritual knowledge in the smallest degree ? Helps for the better understanding of the Bible is all that they can give us. So their value is secondary and subordinate, and so, in fact, Professor Delitzsch confesses. "What," he asks, "is the effect of these labours in distant, inhospitable, and dangerous lands ? To what end this costly work of rummaging in mounds many thousand years old, of digging deep down into the earth in places where no gold or silver is to be found ? Why this rivalry amongst nations for the purpose of securing, each for itself, these desolate hills—and the more the better—in which to excavate ? And from what source, on the other hand, is derived the self-sacrificing interest, ever on the increase, that is shown on both sides of the ocean, in the excavations in Babylonia and Assyria ?"

To either question there is one answer, which, if not exhaustive, nevertheless to a great extent tells us the cause and aim : it is *the Bible*. Professor

Delitzsch, in other places, seems to think that recent discoveries have proved that the Bible was not given by Divine Inspiration, and does not contain a Divine Revelation ;* he endeavours to prove that the morality of Babylon was in some respects higher than that of Israel.† So doing he seems to leave himself destitute of any answer to the question, Why is it the nations brave dangers, spend money, dig toilsomely amongst the Eastern mounds ? It seems hardly worth doing it for such a Bible's sake.

Many people seem to think that the more clearly the influences of foreign nations on Israel's thoughts and customs is demonstrated, the more numerous the parallels between her and the nations of the world—the less reason there is for maintaining that she came under a specially Divine influence. The contrary seems to be the case. The stronger the worldly influence, the stronger must have been that spiritual and Divine power which counteracted it, and made Israel what she was. No one can deny that Israel came to be a different kind of being to all those nations—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and the rest—who had her in their hands, and left their marks upon her. And it would be impossible to maintain, as we have already seen, that Israel, weak and uncultivated, almost always in the presence of crushing worldly power, seldom firmly grasping her own peculiar gifts, was self-made.

Babylon has a long history before Israel has any. There were, it is thought, kingdoms with considerable civilization and organization in the Euphrates

* Pp. 85, 86, 149, 176, 177, 209, 218, 219.

† See Lecture ii. in "Babel and Bible."

valley before the date at which, according to Jewish chronologists, the world was made. Her religious influence was indeed unique. "There is no other ancient religion," says Professor Jastrow,* "which may lay claim to have exercised so large a measure of influence over surrounding nations, shaping as it did the myths and legends of the Hebrews, Phoenicians, and Greeks alike, showing its traces also in the religion of Egypt, and contributing in various ways to the systems of religious thought produced in the ancient East and West." The important point for our purpose to notice is that this influence was exerted in very early times and ceased in later ages. "The religion of Babylonia and Assyria," adds Professor Jastrow, "practically finished its *rôle* before Hebrew monotheism asserted itself;" † by which he means, we presume, the eighth century B.C.

The same author tells us that there is no religion, save that of the Hebrews, whose growth we can trace more satisfactorily "from a crude polytheism based on nature worship and accompanied by primitive rites, to a striking approach towards a monotheistic conception of the Universe, with a highly complicated priestly organization, and an elaborated theological system." ‡ But the readers of his article will see that the main elements of Babylonian religion and morals were fixed when the Babylonian cosmology, as it has come down to us, had been put into shape, and when Hammurabi's code was promulgated. Unprogressiveness seems to be a chief

* Professor Jastrow in article "Religion of Babylonia," Hastings' "Dictionary," extra vol. p. 532.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

characteristic of Babylonia's religious history between the days of Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar.* Nebuchadnezzar's prayers and the Pentitential Psalms show that her religion had become somewhat more ethical during this period, but she seems to make no effort to cast off her old superstitions and her senseless mythology. She reduces the number of her acting deities, but she never grasps the principle of monotheism. The code of Hammurabi and the old traditions of Creation and the Flood, etc., as they had taken shape before his days are, so far as we are aware, the chief contributions which she makes to the library collected by Assurbanipal in the seventh century B.C. This, at least, is clear—the higher and more spiritual ideas of later times did not cast out the crude polytheism and the superstitious practices of the earlier period.

However great the religious influence of Babylonia was in early times, it has not been permanent in the slightest degree. Babylon has not given even the foundations to any of the later religions. There is no doctrine of the religion of Israel which can be traced to Babylon. She gave, no doubt, to the Hebrews (as to other nations) certain rough materials in the shape of primitive myths and legends. This Babylonian clay was refined in the Hebrew furnace, it may be for centuries, before it was used by the Hebrew architects to make certain narratives in

* Bishop Westcott remarks that unprogressiveness is a characteristic of all "Gentile Sacred Books." While the books of the Bible, corresponding with successive stages in the religious advances of men, go forward from ritual to spiritual service, the case is exactly the reverse with the other canons of holy writings.—"The Sacred Books of Pre-Christian Religions," p. 20, in "Cambridge Companion to the Bible."

Genesis, and to serve spiritual purposes which no Babylonian had ever conceived. When we read those narratives it is not the indebtedness to Babylonian sources which strikes us, but rather the marvellous use made of such unpromising materials.

The Babylonian early traditions indicate to us clearly and sufficiently the nature of the Babylonian religion as it was, and as it never ceased to be. It was crude polytheism based on nature worship. It became something more than this, but it was always this. Babylon is always a city of many gods, and these represent forces of nature. Moreover, the existence, side by side, of powers of good and powers of evil is an essential part of her religious belief. The powers of good are stronger, but the powers of evil exist and are active for mischief. How could it be otherwise when Chaos, identified with the Evil Principle, is the mother alike of gods and monsters? Unity in the unseen world and amongst those unseen beings which determine man's destiny is denied to Babylon by her fundamental conceptions.

Still, a tendency towards unity in the Babylonian Pantheon is to be discerned. "A striking approach," Professor Jastrow calls it, "towards a monotheistic conception of the Universe." It will be instructive to examine the character of this approach, for we shall see that it proceeded on principles so false that nothing really good could be expected of it. Changes made in religious teachings for political causes could not possibly lead to higher conceptions of spiritual truths.*

* For the facts, on which the author has no independent knowledge, confer the articles in Hastings' "Dictionary," and especially that of Professor Jastrow, on the "Religion of Babylonia," in the extra volume.

In the early ages, as far back as 3500 B.C., there were numbers of independent states in the Euphrates valley, each with its own capital and each with its own religious cult. The god worshipped was a personification of one of the principal forces of nature. The fortunes of the god and of the nation were inseparably connected. A god rose or fell in importance, even as his tribe or city rose or fell. The ancient gods of the Babylonian Pantheon corresponded to the local gods of these numerous states. Now, these Babylonian petty kingdoms became in process of time, as in other national histories, amalgamated together. In the latter half of the third millennium B.C. the city of Babylon gained that political importance and supremacy which, though sometimes challenged, was never wholly lost till the days of Cyrus, King of Persia. Amidst all the vicissitudes of the seventeen centuries following Hammurabi, Babylon maintained its position as the capital of the country, while the old centres lost their political importance or disappeared altogether.*

This change of political circumstances naturally carried with it change, not indeed in the conception of Deity, but in the character of the religious cults. Political amalgamation involved religious amalgamation. The advance in the position of Babylon meant advance in the position of Babylon's god. There had been different personifications of Nature's forces in the different local centres. The work of Creation, for example, had been the subject of different traditions, and had, indeed, been

* Prof. Jastrow, Hastings' "Dictionary," Art. "Religion of Babylonia," extra vol., p. 534.

assigned to different gods. The one Euphrates Valley State, with Babylon as its capital, must have one religion with harmonized primitive traditions. The Babylonian priesthood took the matter in hand. The result was that the older gods disappeared as acting deities, Marduk, a younger deity, the god of Babylon, became the head of the Pantheon. The old traditions, as current in the different old centres, were combined and harmonized. The *rôles* of Bel or Ea in the establishment of the Universe were transferred to Marduk. Theological explanations were given of accomplished facts. The old gods are described as making a voluntary surrender of their powers into Marduk's hand. The Babylonian cosmology found on the seven tablets of Creation contains and illustrates this religious change. It is a story composed of various versions of Creation, which have been carefully edited and modified, so that the glory of the work of Creation might be ascribed to Marduk, the god of the chief city in the Eastern world.

The supremacy of Marduk in the religious world is thus a consequence of the supremacy of Babylon in the political world.* The concentration of divine powers in his person is a consequence of the centralization and unification of the different states of the Euphrates Valley under the headship of Babylon. The tendency to monotheism, if such it can be called, is the reflex of political facts upon the religious domain. The process of unification is thus based on false principles. Things in heaven are regarded as shadows of things on earth. We know how the true and eternal

* There are some interruptions in Marduk's supremacy. See Article ast cited, p. 545.

doctrine of the unity of God has tended to the recognition of unity of the world and of man. We know, to take a local illustration, how the Divine unity of the Church in England welded together the different kingdoms of the Heptarchy. In these cases the eternal spiritual truth came first, and the temporal political fact ensued. The Babylonians, reversing the process, placed the pyramid on its apex, and founded their heavenly temples on the shifting sands of earth.

The most striking approach towards monotheism is connected by Prof. Jastrow with Ashur, the god of Nineveh. Ashur's supremacy amongst the gods was in like manner connected with the rise of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian Empire is stronger than the Babylonian for several centuries, ending with the seventh B.C. Nineveh, not Babylon, is the capital of the Eastern world. Once again political facts modify religious ideas, though not fundamentally. Marduk is too secure in his supreme position to be deposed. Assyria is only an offshoot from Babylon, and she depended on Babylon for everything—culture and religion alike. Assyria simply adapted the Babylonian worship and faith to her own political and social conditions. Ashur in the North took Marduk's place in the South. There was no god beside him in Assyria. The early traditions about him gave some help to the Assyrians in regarding him as their only god; by these he was not brought, like Marduk, into direct association with any other god. But Ashur was essentially the god whom the Assyrians made; his very name identified him with the Assyrian state, and he was a representative of its warlike

genius. Politics gave him his position, and he never even attained the position of Assyria's only god. This approach to the monotheistic conception of the Universe in Ashur cannot be regarded as very close.

It may, perhaps, be asked whether the advance of Marduk in the Babylonian Pantheon is not similar to that advance in the conception of Jehovah amongst the chosen people which we can discern in the Old Testament. There are without doubt *prima facie* resemblances. Undoubtedly Jehovah becomes greater in the Jewish mind as the ages pass by. Gradually He is recognized to be the only God, the God of all the families of the earth ; not simply the God which only Israel worships, and which she should worship alone. Jehovah, God of Israel, is seen to be Jehovah Sabaoth as well. There is then a similar exaltation to be found in the history of the worship of the two national deities ; but the causes of the exaltations will be found to be very different. The one rests on a material, the other on a spiritual basis. Marduk is reckoned greater because his city Babylon is greater. Jehovah is felt to be greater because the teaching concerning Him becomes more spiritual. The Babylonian priests manipulated their ancient traditions so as to make them correspond to existing circumstances. The Jewish prophets meditating on and digesting their national history, deduced from it how incomparably great and righteous and holy Jehovah was. They did not think their God to be greater because the kingdoms of the nations were being delivered into their hands. On the contrary, the greatness of Israel's God was realized when Israel's own political greatness was passing away. Thus Marduk's

exaltation in Babylon was a political arrangement, Jehovah's exaltation in Israel a spiritual intuition.

Professor Jastrow, describing the growth of the Babylonian religion, speaks not only of progress from polytheism towards monotheism, but also from primitive rites to a highly complicated priestly organization and an elaborate theological system. The words, when weighed, do not suggest to us progress to higher and better things; and, as a matter of fact, there was very little. The progress, such as it was, never eliminated the old gross superstitions. Here, also, the Babylonian primitive beliefs were the cause of the non-progressive character of its religion. Its doctrine of a first cause never ceased to dominate its development. Chaos is the first cause of all good and evil powers and existences. Naturally, the latter have as much right to live as the former. Naturally, also, the gods, though stronger, are removed to a higher sphere, whilst the evil remains and fills the air breathed by man. The good powers are well disposed to man, and they are stronger than the evil. There is comfort in that thought. Marduk, we know, conquered Tiamat. But it is only a sort of general surveillance which the god exercises over human affairs, whereas all those evils, great and small, common to man—those losses and diseases and accidents of which most lives are full—are the work of evil spirits.

The world, then, to a Babylonian, was full of evil spirits, who could, at their pleasure, be invisible, or assume repulsive forms. And along with them there were witches and sorcerers—evil spirits in human form, or wicked men who had evil spirits at their

command. These were more dangerous than the evil spirits, because they could select their victims and cast their spells on those whom they hated, whilst the spirits worked their mischief in a blind kind of way. Evil powers were thus always lurking at man's door, and they sometimes took up their abode within his body for his destruction.

Now, it is the belief in these evil powers which determines the character of the Babylonian worship. They have to be neutralized or counteracted by exorcisms, spells, and symbolical rites. And, moreover, the gods, though beneficent powers, are somewhat capricious in their favour. They could be offended by the withholding of gifts, or mistakes in ritual, or other causes difficult to divine. It had to be determined by omens and oracles when they would be favourable, and what help they would give. The worshipper had to grope in the dark to find the right god to address, the right prayer or formula to use, and the right time to use it. The greatest care had to be taken in the performance of details. Failure to obtain the request was due to the use of a wrong or unfortunate formula. The consequence was the compilation of many series of incantation rituals : "hundreds of formulae produced in the course of time for the purpose of relieving those attacked by the demons or bewitched by the sorceress and sorceresses, an omen-literature which assumed enormous dimensions."* The Babylonian worshippers were thus helpless slaves to superstitions of the most degrading kind. Their lives were darkened by the terror of the powers of evil.

* "Religion of Babylonia," p. 551.

But it must not be supposed that the ethical element was absent from their worship. There are prayers and hymns which show a true sense of the Divine greatness, a spirit of dependence on His goodness and mercy, and deep feelings of contrition and self-humiliation for sin. It was not the absence of gifts or mistakes in ritual only which caused the Divine displeasure. The gods, or some of them, required justice from their worshippers. This love of righteousness is specially connected with the sun-god Shamash.* It is seen in the prologue to the code of Hammurabi and in the Shamash hymns.† Shamash destroys those who plan evil, who remove boundaries, who accept bribes. He is gracious to and prolongs the life of those who act in the contrary way. Shamash hears the prayers of the poor, the lowly, the needy, and the weak. A deep sense of sin is shown, also, in the Penitential Psalms. But it is an external sense rather than an internal. The man knows he has done wrong, because he is suffering chastisement, but he does not know what wrong he has done. Moreover, it is clear that the good spirit in Babylonian worship was unable to cast out the evil. The ethical hymns and Penitential Psalms are mixed up with the incantations and the magical rites, and are themselves called incantations.‡

There is a direct and detailed comparison between the Bible and the sacred literature of Babylon which recent discoveries enable us to make, which should

* With other gods as well. Cf. Cook, "Laws of Moses," p. 7.

† Hammurabi is the King of Justice to whom Shamash has entrusted judgment: *ibid.*, p. 13.

‡ "Religion of Babylonia," pp. 566, 567.

lead to valuable results. Comparisons are valuable according as, and so far as the circumstances of the things compared are similar. Two workmen are best compared when we can place side by side their finished productions formed of the same materials and for the same purposes. Such a comparison we are able to make, for we can place side by side the traditions current amongst the Assyrians and Babylonians about Creation and Primitive man and those found in the early chapters of Genesis.

The close connection between the two traditions is beyond all doubt. The parallels in language, incident, and general course of the narrative, are unmistakable. Nevertheless, close as are the resemblances, the differences in thought are immense. How is it, we have a right to ask all those who deny to the Bible any special Divine Inspiration, that Biblical and Babylonian writers, starting with the same traditions, moulded and modified them into two different things?

For our purpose, at present, it is not of primary importance to decide the exact kind of the connection between the Hebrew and the Babylonian primitive traditions. Some have thought that the narratives contained in the early chapters of Genesis were communicated to the chosen people by special revelation. In that case the Babylonian accounts would give an instance, startling and vivid, of the possibility of corruption of truth into error, and of noble and dignified narrative or picture into grotesque mythology. Others, with greater probability, believe that the Hebrews got their conceptions of the first things from Babylon, whether in the form in which these have come

down to us in Babylonian literature, or, more probably, in a form of greater simplicity and less corruption. In that case our comparison would illustrate the power working in the Hebrew nation, and specially her great teachers, to prepare and use material, not in itself noble or true, for the expression and communication of the highest truths. Bishop Ryle's words would be very much to the point : "The saints and prophets of Israel stripped the old legend of its pagan deformities. Its shape and outline survived. But its spirit was changed, its religious teaching and significance were transfigured, in the light of the Revelation of the Lord. The popular tradition was not abolished ; it was preserved, purified, hallowed, that it might subserve the Divine purpose of transmitting, as in a figure, spiritual teaching upon eternal truths." *

The Babylonian tradition of the Creation and Primitive man which has come down to us is believed to have been framed considerably more than two thousand years before Christ. It is thus at least as old as Abraham. The Hebrew accounts of the same are twofold ; the earlier being put into writing according to the critics about the ninth century, and the latter somewhere in the fifth century B.C. The thought naturally arises, Is it fair to compare traditions differing in date by one thousand, and perhaps even by two thousand years ?

It would not be fair to compare an earlier stage of the growth of one religion with a later stage of another, but this is not what we propose to do. The Babylonian nation was much more ancient than the Hebrew. It had been fully established a thousand

* "Early Narratives of Genesis," p. 13 f.

years, and perhaps more, before a son had been born to Abraham. The religion of the Babylonians meets us, we are told in the oldest inscriptions, as a tolerably finished system.* Its account of Creation, etc., though ancient as it is, bears traces of editing and modification. The Babylonian kingdom continues to exist and prosper. But its religion has not within it the power of healthy growth. Fifteen hundred years after Abraham its ideas of Creation remain in their original form. The folklore of Abraham's family may not have been more rational than that of the Babylonians of his time. However that may be, the grotesque mythological element is absent from both the earlier and later Biblical narratives. In a word, though the Babylonian and Hebrew nations start originally with the same traditions, the one speedily puts away its childish things, whilst the other retains them.

But do we find, after all, a very considerable difference between the early traditions of the two nations when, without religious prejudices, we compare them? Undoubtedly there is. They differ as widely as truth and error, or if this is to assume too much, even as wisdom and folly. This will be seen when we examine carefully the two chief points on which comparison is possible, viz. the stories of Creation and of the Flood.

When we compare the two stories of Creation, both, it may be maintained, are equally unscientific. The science of the narrative in Genesis seems to be, as always in the Bible, the science of the times. It adds nothing to scientific knowledge, and it

* Hommel, in Hastings' "Dictionary," vol. i. p. 215, Art. "Babylonia."

contradicts, in some points, scientific conclusions now accepted. The Biblical account might seem to be unable to claim any advantage over the Babylonian in the scientific field, and yet that would not be altogether correct. The Babylonian account describes the evolution from chaos to order. That is a subject on which science has a right to speak. The Bible is plainly teaching truths of religion and theology. It is telling of that personal will behind the forces of nature which many scientific men postulate, but on which they have no word to say. It does not fly in the face of accurate science. Its mythological elements are inoffensive and serve noble purposes of a moral and spiritual kind. In all fairness writings must be judged by their success or failure to accomplish their intentions. The Hebrew writers did not propose to teach men concerning the laws of Nature or methods of Creation: they did desire to point to the One Almighty Creator of all, and they accomplished their aim. The wise men of Babylonian teachers on the other hand endeavoured to frame a theory of beginnings and utterly failed. They involved themselves in a hopeless tangle of contradiction and obscurity.* To make Chaos the first principle, both for the gods and for Creation and man, is a piece of utter folly. This being the fundamental idea in the Babylonian story of Creation, we are not surprised to hear it described as "wild, grotesque, tumultuous mythology." The Biblical story, on the other hand, is "serene, majestic, calm, and sober prose."†

* See Hastings' "Dictionary," extra vol., pp. 568, 572.

† Whitehouse, Art. "Cosmogony," Hastings' "Dictionary," i. 505.

Those who would deny the spiritual truths contained in the Biblical account of Creation, would hardly deny also the wisdom and dignity of its religious teaching. Its author has the highest conceptions of the greatness and wisdom of God as shown in Creation, and he adds to this an adequate conception of the dignity of man's nature and office in the world. He is acquainted with teachings which he utterly rejects. The Deity is not Nature, nor any of its powers or elements. He is not, in particular, the Sun or Moon. These are His creatures, how can the Creator be identified with the works of His own hands? He was before them all; by His word were they made and set in their own proper place. Again, though the author is conscious of the existence of evil and sin, he is clear that it was not an original element in Creation. God made all things, having created the stuff of which they were made, and pronounced them all to be very good. He unhesitatingly rejects the errors of polytheism. There is no room in the Universe for any God save Him—the Only One who was its Creator and Fashioner. He is able to combine these two truths—God's separateness from Creation and His nearness to it—which heathen religions and philosophies could never hold with an equal grasp. The Most High humbleth Himself to make as well as to behold the things which are in heaven and earth. And when the writer comes to speak of man we feel that no account could establish, on a firmer base the inspiring principle, "Noblesse oblige," for the human race of all time. Made by God Himself, in His own image, exalted above the animals in nature, and given

dominion over them, man is worthy to be God's representative and viceroy in the world of matter and sense, and also, which is much more, he is made capable of knowing his God and holding communion with Him. The record of Creation thus contains a first Gospel for man which becomes in due time the foundation to the second.* The first and later account of Creation is, no doubt, the grander, more developed of the two. But the second is remarkable because it puts woman in her proper place in the world, *i.e.* in independence, but also in close relation with and on equality with man. She alone in all creation corresponds to him, *i.e.*, is adequate to him, is intellectually his equal, and is capable of satisfying his needs and instincts. Marriage with one woman is declared to be the Divine law, and to be the closest of all possible unions. The foundations for a lofty religion and a pure morality were thus laid for the nation which had such a doctrine of God, and of man, and of woman, and their mutual relations one with the other. And the race which had such a noble beginning could not fail to hope that it would have also a still nobler end.

It would be impossible to say how much of noble thought and life has had its source in the Biblical record of Creation. It would be equally impossible to find any noble teachings in the Babylonian narrative. The Bible begins with God; the Babylonian with Chaos. From Chaos as a first principle, all things good and evil alike come. She is the mother at once of the gods and of the monsters. She is the evil principle of darkness and confusion

* Driver, "Genesis," p. 41.

which her divine children fight and destroy. Thus the Babylonians utterly failed to frame any worthy conception of a First Cause. Creation and man and the gods themselves are dishonoured and discredited in their origin. The gods are many, but they are not all powerful, and they quail and flee before the might of Chaos (Tiamat). Different members of the Pantheon become supreme according as the nations or cities in which they are worshipped become supreme amongst the nations. Marduk the god of Babylon supersedes Ea and Bel, as the city Babylon supersedes Eridu and Nippur amongst the cities of the world. The fortunes of the nations thus decide who shall have the supremacy amongst the gods above. The gift of the title and office of Creator is in the hands of man.

This farrago of nonsense could have no power to help any man to feel true reverence to the powers above him, neither could it aid him to live a worthy life. We must bear in mind that it represents the matured cosmological theories of the Babylonians—not merely the primitive traditions, but these, combined with the scholastic astrological system, and the whole interpreted in accord with the theological doctrines developed in the schools of Babylon. These grotesque follies are the matured wisdom of the wise men of Babylonia.* It attempts to explain the evolution from chaos to order. It degrades the nature of Deity, it lays no foundation for relations between God and man.

Similar results follow a comparison between the Biblical and the Babylonian accounts of the Flood.

* Hastings' "Dictionary," "Religion of Babylon," extra vol. p. 572.

The Biblical account is full of moral and spiritual teaching. The Babylonian is destitute of all moral and spiritual elements.

As the Creation story in the Bible tells of God's greatness and wisdom, so the story of the Flood declares His righteousness and mercy. Sin has now entered the world, and has indeed covered it. "God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt ; for all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth." Sin must not go unpunished, so man and all living creatures must be destroyed ; but Noah finds grace in the eyes of the Lord. The Flood is a great declaration of the mind of God in regard to sin. It also declares the eternal truth that God's judgments are mingled with mercy. Moreover, a promise is made that the earth should not be destroyed again. There is, however, no room for the suggestion that the punishment was not justly due, or not wisely administered. To use the words of the 29th Psalm, Jehovah sat as king at the Flood. And again, though Jehovah is said to smell the sweet savour of Noah's sacrifice, it is not that, but His knowledge of man's innate propensity to evil, which is described as the cause of God's forbearance in the days to come. It was not for lack of burnt-offerings and sacrifices that the flood came, but the constantly evil imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart, and the violence and corruption with which he had filled the earth. The narrative in its earliest form gives clear teaching concerning God's requirements. These are not burnt-offerings and sacrifices, but moral qualities, such as righteousness. It is said to Noah, "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." On the other hand, the moral element in the

Babylonian account of the Flood is hardly discernible. It is in no way calculated to fill men's minds with holy fear of the just punishment of sin.

It is indeed, in some sense, a Divine judgment; for it is said, yet only incidentally, and at the end of the narrative, "Let no flood come any more as a punishment upon man." But the idea of judgment is by no means prominent. No reason whatever is given for the Divine resolve to bring a flood when the narrative records it. No care is taken to vindicate the justice of the Divine judgment. On the contrary, the gods agree that the flood is a mistake never to be repeated, because it destroyed all indiscriminately, whether sinners or not. It was deeply regretted by some of them. "Why," says Ishtar, "did I assent to evil?" The god Bel, who was most responsible for it, is to be punished by being forbidden to come to the incense offering. He had acted unadvisedly in destroying man. Nor, again, is it made clear that Ut-Napishtin, who corresponds to Noah, is saved because of his righteousness. His piety is mentioned incidentally. The real reason for his escape is division in the Divine counsels. One god reveals the secrets of the Pantheon, to the disgust of another, and preserves Ut-Napishtin's life. Again, the Flood loses all moral significance if it does not make manifest to man God's righteousness. The Babylonian account does not accomplish this purpose. The fact that the gods themselves are said to assert its injustice shows that man also regarded it as unjust. The whole spirit of the narrative proves this.

God's punishments, the Bible teaches, not only

manifest His righteousness, but His glory also. They fill men with the idea of His majesty and power. The Babylonian narrative is very far from doing this. At the Flood the gods set loose forces which they are unable to control, and are overwhelmed with grief and terror. When it comes at their bidding, they shrink back in fear to the highest heaven. They cower like dogs. Ishtar groans like a woman in travail, and laments she has agreed to the infliction of such an evil. The gods and the spirits of the earth weep along with her with bowed-down heads and compressed lips. Again, when the flood subsides and men's sacrifice is offered, they gather like flies, it is said, above the sacrifice. Bel is forbidden to approach, because the Flood was his work. He, on the other hand, is angry that a single man has escaped, but being pacified, he raises the man and his wife into immortal beings, who live with the gods and are like unto them.

Thus, in the course of the narrative, we see the gods acting without wisdom and justice, trembling like cowards, cowering like dogs, crying like women, quarrelling like men, gorging like flies, passing from one extreme to another as weak men are wont, raising to immortality and deity those whom they had failed to destroy. No man reading the narrative would be likely to say, "Who is able to stand before these wise and mighty, holy and righteous gods?"

In any comparison between Israel and Babylon the code of Hammurabi requires special attention. Before the days of Abraham, or, at least, in his days, this code was law amongst the people of Babylonia. It shows clearly that the fundamental principles of

justice and righteousness were understood and enforced in those early days. The code of Hammurabi is in the main a righteous code, and Hammurabi himself has a lofty idea of the duties and responsibilities of a king.

In Hammurabi we see a king who is pious towards the gods, acting by their inspiration, and in accordance with their directions. He regards himself as chosen by them to be the shepherd and father of his people. His people are cherished in his heart, rest in peace under his protection, and are concealed in his wisdom. It is his care that the strong shall not oppress the feeble, that the orphans and widows shall dwell securely, and that all shall enjoy happiness. His idea of sovereignty transcends that of his successor, Nebuchadnezzar, as it is described in the book of Daniel. His description of the work intrusted to him by the gods would increase our respect for the most righteous king who ever reigned in Israel. Nor was this merely a matter of theory. Hammurabi's letters prove that he investigated the suits of his poorest subjects, and did not hesitate to reverse the decisions of his governors. He was a king who reigned in righteousness. The code itself hardly shows the same lofty spirit. The justice of Hammurabi's code is, of course, crude ; but we could not expect it to be otherwise in those early times. On the whole, it does not suffer by comparison with the Mosaic code in this respect. It seems to legalize no flagrant injustice, except those which arise from regarding the family and not the individual as the unit of life. The Old Testament, it is well known, does the same. The rights of the slave; it may be

observed, are recognized, but rather in the interests of his master than in his own. The morality of the code is imperfect. There are clear indications of the practice of immoral rites in connection with religion, similar to those referred to in the Old Testament. Still, Babylonian worship was not all immoral, as Phoenician worship seems to have been; the votaries of Marduk vowed perpetual chastity. If the moral laws were carried out, it is clear that the gross immorality which, according to Herodotus, prevailed in Babylon, was utterly impossible. Witchcraft, again, is recognized in Hammurabi's laws by the restrictions they place on its exercise. On the whole, however, we must acknowledge that the law of Moses does not surpass in excellence the code of Hammurabi. In any fair comparison of the two there will be much to be said for each. And this we may say, the law was, apparently, much better administered in Babylonia than in Israel. In Babylonia there were proper courts and official judges. Israel, on the other hand, suffered from the want of a regular executive for justice. Everything depended on the particular character of the judge or king. Local judges were not able to hold their own against the commands of tyrants, as the story of Naboth illustrates. The writings of the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries indicate that oppression of the poor and corrupt administration of justice were the crying evils of the times.

We must allow to Babylon, as against Israel, the great advantages of superior political wisdom, higher civilization, and better organization. We must admit also against Israel the existence in her code of many

laws of imperfect justice and institutions of imperfect morality. But when we have done this, we may claim that the Mosaic law made more effectually for justice and righteousness than the code of Hammurabi. As in everything else, so in the Old Testament laws, the superiority is not to be found in the letter, but in the spirit. The Mosaic law is mixed with injunctions and teachings which tended to their own abrogation. They educated men to a higher morality than their own. The code of Hammurabi is in the main a civil code. Religion was a matter of deep concern to him, but he separated it from morality, at the least in his laws. Hebrew law-givers could never have done this. Professor Kautzsch says, "A fair estimate of the two codes is reached, not by comparing the matter which they have in common, but by looking at the sayings where the Book of the Covenant has the advantage over the Babylonian code. But these are the sayings . . . regarding the poor *gērîm*, "slaves," and enemies, and for parallels to them we may search the two hundred and eighty-two paragraphs of Hammurabi in vain, because such are impossible on the soil of natural religion."*

Professor Kautzsch is here comparing the code of Hammurabi with the Book of the Covenant. In Hammurabi's code, Babylon's highest point is reached. The Book of the Covenant is Israel's earliest code of law. As the years pass by, Israel's ideas of justice develop. It is almost unnecessary to say that there is nothing in Hammurabi's code comparable to the Deuteronomist's words, that God's

* Hastings' "Dictionary," extra vol., Art. "Religion of Israel," p. 665.

commands were to be in Israel's heart, and that she was to love the Lord her God with all her heart and soul and strength. There are thus breathings of a higher Spirit in Israel's code.* Under its influence, and the influence of her great prophets, she advances to higher things. The change from Old Testament to New Testament morality is not a revolution but a development to a higher life. No such development is to be found, or was even possible in Babylon. To Hammurabi there succeeded no line of prophets, and no Christ. The doctrine of "survival of the fittest" would seem to have a special application here. The code of Moses still lives; the code of Hammurabi died and was buried hundreds of years ago. Recent excavators have found its tombs and its body—nothing more.

A comparison between Babylon's and Israel's religion and laws is a comparison between the dead and the living. We derive our knowledge of Babylon from a heap of ruins; Israel's teaching and influence we discern in the higher life of mankind. Even in those days, when Babylon was still the mistress of the nations, little religious growth, and, therefore, little religious life can be traced in her. That which might be called growth is essentially artificial. It was an adjustment of old beliefs to modern circumstances; it was a condensation of religious cults. It was not an elimination of childish follies or a purification from corruptions. It was not, in a word, like

* The facts concerning Hammurabi's code are derived from Johns' Article, in Hastings' "Dictionary," extra vol., "Code of Hammurabi," p. 584, and from Cook's "The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi."

the growth of the healthy child, who gradually casts off his weaknesses and imperfections, and attains to a fuller life. It is in this point that we contrast it with the religion of Israel. In this there were, at first, many crudenesses and imperfections, but Israel's spiritual life was abundant, and it was being continually renewed, and its religious forms were simple and pure. So we see it gradually cast off its childish things and beggarly elements and grow into the perfection of man. If, indeed, the Priestly code had been the final form of Israel's religion, it would have been comparable with that of Babylon, and it would have died as Babylon's religion died, and its remains would have been found by the Palestine Exploration Fund, if, indeed, any had cared to search the ruins of so unimportant a land. The final form of Judaism was not, however, the Law, nor even the Prophets, but the teaching of Him who said that He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. The Babylonian religion, on the other hand, could never purge out from itself its original falsehoods. It could concentrate its many deities into few; it could rearrange their positions in the Pantheon, but it could never rise to the idea of one God, it could never exorcise its evil spirits, nor cast its idols to the moles and to the bats. All its life it is subject to bondage; always in its faith and worship evil and good are inseparably mixed. It never knows one God of infinite wisdom and power and love, who can be approached without enchantments, and who, being righteous, loves beyond everything righteousness in His creatures. Ethical monotheism could be grafted on Israel's law and history, but not on the Babylonian nature-myths.

It has been said scoffingly, that men make gods in their own image and likeness. This is a coarse way of stating that which many men believe, viz. that all religions are human inventions. Assuming the truth of this statement, what a vast difference there is between the Israelite and the Babylonian! The Babylonian's idea of the Deity and His requirements, and the way of approach to Him, differ from the Israelite's as light from darkness. The Babylonian, wise and great and mighty, after the flesh, is a child and a fool, compared with the Israelite, in spiritual things. And yet the Israelite was a pupil in the Babylonian school, and was ultimately crushed by the Babylonian world power. Professor Jastrow says that the Babylonia-Assyria religion represents, on its best side, the Hebrew religion alone excepted, the high-water mark of ancient thought. One thing only remains to be added—we seem entitled to ask for a sufficient answer to the question, What advantage had the Jew?

XIII

PROOF FROM PROPHECY

A VERY powerful proof is furnished by Prophecy to the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

Natural Israel—Israel after the flesh—was never true to her ideals or faithful in her allegiance to God either before or after the Babylonian exile, in the times of the Old Covenant or of the New. But there were some very remarkable men—Israelites, indeed—who learned what God taught them, and they are Israel's prophets and seers. It is to them the Word of God came, and in them the Word of God took root, sprang up, and bare fruit. It is in them, the true Israelites, not in any of her less worthy sons, not, most certainly, in Israel at large who was unfaithful, that we can discern the difference between the People and the nations. It is in them, in Old Testament times, that we are able to discern most clearly the character and the power of Inspiration. The Holy Ghost, we believe, spake by the prophets.

Prophecy cannot be said to be a gift peculiar to Israel. Balaam, son of Beor, of the mountains of Aram, is a true prophet, though a bad man, and there were prophets of Baal and Asherah which fed at Jezebel's table. The Greeks, also, had their prophets,

soothsayers, sibyls, and the like. And all of these were supposed to be possessed by or to possess a spirit not their own, and to speak through it words beyond human knowledge. It is not of any importance to us to decide what truth, or how much of truth, there was in their claim to superhuman power. We may be quite willing to admit provisionally that amongst the Gentiles true prophets were to be found. Further, we should acknowledge that the madness of the Gentile seer or Pythoness had some points of similarity with the ecstasy of the Hebrew prophets, more especially in the early times. On the other hand, Samuel, as described by Saul's servant, is not unlike the wise man or woman of later times. But we must judge of Hebrew prophecy by its choicest productions. There is development in Hebrew prophecy in the course of the Old Testament times. In heathendom no such development can be traced. Above all, Gentile prophecy is not a practical power. Professor Mozley, in his lectures on the Old Testament,* points out that though Prophecy "belongs alike to both the Jewish and Pagan dispensations the difference is enormous in the way in which it is treated, and the account to which it is turned in the two." In the pagan world Prophecy "founded nothing, it erected no institutions, no framework, no body, no Church ; it passed away and wandered into space." It "never grew into a practical and directing power." On the other hand, as soon as Prophecy found a receptacle in the chosen race, it grew strong, it became an architect and builder, it raised institutions, it enacted ordinances. In Abraham it founded

* Pp. 16, 18.

a family, in Moses it framed a law, in David it erected a kingdom. It was closely connected with the chosen people, for the Jewish nation became the regular and guarded depository for the sacred gift. "Prophecy had thus the most striking practical result, and proved itself an instrument of real efficiency and power. There is nothing," he adds, "in the history of the character, the sentiment, the aspirations of nations, which is equal to, which can for a moment be compared with the mighty impulse and current of faith in the Jewish community."

Prophecy, though not peculiar to the chosen people, had, we see, unique power in them. When we consider its essential character, it should be unnecessary to say that Prophecy is not identical with Prediction. Prophecy is of closer kin to preaching than to prediction. The prophets' word would not have been the practical power in Israel which it was if it had related solely to the future. It is for the present crisis that men and nations need guides, and it was guidance that the prophets gave. All the prophets did not predict. He who is reckoned to have been the greatest of all—Moses—made very few predictions. A prophet is one who speaks for another, as the Greek etymology teaches. The original etymology of the Hebrew word for prophet is unknown; but usage declares him to be one who speaks to his people the word which God puts in his mouth. In a word, he is God's spokesman. In like manner Aaron is styled Moses' prophet and mouthpiece.* This alone would convince us that prophecy is not equivalent to prediction. God's words, we shall readily admit, refer to

* Cf. Exod. iv. 15, 16, with Exod. vii. 1.

the past and present, as well as to the future. Thus, we may say, every prediction is a prophecy, but not every prophecy is a prediction.

There were false prophets as well as true in Israel, and what is almost of more importance, prophets of a lower as well as of a higher inspiration. Some prophets spake out of their own heart; of some it is said that they were even inspired by a lying spirit from the Lord; of some that God had not sent them. There are cupboard prophets, whom Micah describes as walking in the wind and falsehood, and prophesying of wine and strong drink. There was a large prophetic class or order, and as Professor Sanday says, "Where there is a professional class there are sure to be professional failings." "There would be small natures among them as well as great. They would be apt to fall into conventional and unreal ways of speaking."* It is plain that not all the words of the prophets contained in Holy Scripture have the same abidingness or spiritual power. Stranger still, it would seem that the undoubted word of a true prophet needed not only interpretation, but testing. Words spoken in the Spirit were not always words which God would have His people obey. St. Paul did not follow the guidance of the true prophet Agabus, not to go up to Jerusalem, though other disciples speaking in the Spirit had said the same. The prophetic word was not that easy and simple, far less that infallible guide which we are inclined to suppose. St. Paul might easily have been deceived by Agabus. And it is plain that prophecy, like all institutions in which

* Bampton Lectures, chap. iii. p. 134.

man has a substantial part, was liable to fall into utter corruption. Jeremiah had no greater or more dangerous enemies than the prophets of his time.

Many characteristics of the teaching of the Bible, and so of prophetic teaching, tending to prove its Divine Inspiration, have been already spoken of. There are two others peculiarly prophetic in character, which it is proposed to consider now. They are these: (1) The prophetic words have a life within them which makes them capable of adaptation and expansion; (2) The prophetic words have a truth within them such that they receive fulfilment.

(1) Prophetic words are, like living things, capable of growth. They have a certain meaning in the prophets' time at their birth, in their utterance, or when first committed to writing; but it is commonly found, after the lapse of time, that they have a greater and nobler meaning than their speakers knew. It is in this particular, no doubt, the Inspiration of selection comes in. Many a true prophetic word had little permanent value. It served its whole purpose at the time of its utterance. The words contained in the Bible, on the contrary, abide in their power. Whether every prophetic word had a literal fulfilment in the present or the immediate future we are unable to say. Some think this is not often the case. We hardly know enough of Old Testament history to say. But this seems certain—the prophetic word had not the fulfilment we expected, especially in point of time; but it is characteristic of them to bear a meaning which could hardly have been consciously in the speaker's mind, and which most certainly was not fulfilled till long after. This fact, of which many

instances could be adduced, shows that prophetic words fulfil a certain law everywhere at work in the world. Things with life have a potential force within them, tending to make them greater than they now are, enabling them to fulfil, under certain circumstances, purposes beyond their present capacity. Things with life, in a word, grow. Things with life have something of a Divine character, for God is the source of all life. Things which man makes, on the other hand, are dead things. They may be thoroughly well adapted for their purpose, they may be full of wisdom and beauty; but there is in them no life of their own, they cannot grow into something higher and better. Divine things have the nature of seeds. The seed, given right conditions, will expand itself into the plant, the flower, the tree. The seed has the potentiality of that plant which it will be within itself—a thing much greater and nobler than itself. It has been already said that, in the opinion of the present writer, the Bible differs from other books, not so much in its Inspiration as in the character of its Inspiration. It is not to be denied that many human words contain a life within them which those who read and ponder over them develop into something nobler and higher than that which was in their author's mind. The true poet, the nobler teacher, say words with a meaning deeper than they are aware of. But it must be claimed that the words of the Bible have this power within them in a marvellous degree.

There are numerous passages all over the Old Testament which irresistibly lead us to ask, "Could the writer have known the Christian truth which most certainly can be expressed in his words?"

Our answers to the question will vary ; but sometimes we shall be compelled to admit that he could not have known it, and yet the truth is in his words, even as a flower, or as a fruit is in the seeds. His words having grown in Christian minds express admirably Christian verities. The principle enunciated holds specially in regard to what are called Messianic prophecies. Reading the Old Testament with Christian eyes, we cannot fail to see Christ and His teaching and His Church there. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Were, then, the Old Testament teachers premature Christians ? The thing is impossible. Was the prophet speaking directly and solely of the coming Christ ? The prophet's outlook may be in the distant future, but his standpoint is in the present time. His words seem generally, at least, to have an immediate significance. He is speaking of some king or deliverer, of some truth or salvation, appropriate to his own times. The earlier Isaiah spoke of deliverance from Assyria in the words we regard as peculiarly Messianic ; the later Isaiah was telling of the deliverance from Babylon and the restoration of Jerusalem and her temple, when he was describing the mission and work of the Servant of the Lord. A very plain instance may be found in Psalm xlv. It describes the marriage of a Theocratic king with a foreign princess. Reading it, one is forced to the conclusion that the Psalmist is referring to a contemporaneous event. He is drawing a picture of a reigning monarch. It is a marriage ode composed for some particular king of David's line when he married a foreign princess. Who is the king ? Searching Israelitish history

through there is none to whom the allusions in the Psalm apply so well as Solomon. For our purpose the original reference is immaterial. Pharaoh's daughter was the foreign princess whom he married.

If we read the Psalm with Solomon in our mind, we see that he realizes very poorly the description of the Psalmist. Are we, then, to ascribe the Psalmist's glowing description to Eastern hyperbole, or to the fulsome flattery of a court poet? Exaggerations are wont to be monstrosities; the different parts of the description are not equally balanced; the gods of heathen mythology, of Homer, for instance, are enlarged men, but not nobler. The Psalmist, on the contrary, is able when idealizing Solomon to describe, with a wonderful accuracy, the second Adam, *i.e.* the type of a nobler and higher humanity. His expectations of the beneficent consequences of the marriage, disappointed in Solomon's case, adumbrate those blessings which come to humanity from the mystical union between Christ and His Church. His words thus express truths and realities and not monstrosities, and can be adapted to describe persons and things far beyond his ken. It is so with many other passages in the Old Testament. We read them and say, "Is not this the Christ?" That poetic or prophetic idealization should be found to describe historical realities is the unique property of the Old Testament Scriptures. Other nations have their pictures of golden ages, or blessed isles, or Utopias. But where are the corresponding realities to be found?

The characteristic of the Old Testament Scriptures we are considering is illustrated admirably by the

doctrine of Eternal Life. Was Eternal Life revealed to the men of the Old Covenant? It is plain that a nation which lived in Egypt so long must have been familiar with the idea of continued existence after death. Nevertheless, rewards or punishments in another world are not presented to the Israelite mind in any of the different parts of the Mosaic Law, or in any of the historical books—as a motive of conduct. The land of Canaan bounds the horizon of the chosen people, whether for evil or for good. Moreover, it must have been difficult to formulate a doctrine of retribution in another world whilst the doctrine of personality was so vague. The family could not share the fortunes of the individual in another world. That Eternal Life was not the accepted doctrine of all Jews in our Lord's time seems to indicate that it was, like other doctrines, a later development—accepted by the Pharisees, the teachers of developed Judaism; rejected by the Sadducees with other Pharisaic developments.

From many passages in the Old Testament we should gather that the Jews generally believed in survival after death. The story of Samuel and the witch of Endor, the words of David concerning his dead child, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," and other passages, sufficiently prove this. But survival after death and immortality are wholly different things. From many passages we may infer that the Jews believed the state of the dead to be a state of nothingness—existence which was only bare existence, not worthy of the name of life, and not connected with life on earth either in the way of reward or of punishment,

It would seem that the Jewish nation arrived at a belief in eternal life, not many centuries before Christ. Some of the great teachers probably had hopes—hopes of the nature of deductions concerning the nature of God and His dealings with man, but not based on any promises of God. We can find no book of the canonical Old Testament which expresses a hope of immortality so clearly as the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom.*

Nevertheless, there are many passages in the Old Testament in which we can express with force and beauty our sure and certain hope. And this is true because the Old Testament writers have a firm grasp of the foundation truth of all doctrines of life—because they believe in the living and righteous God. The seed truth of immortality is that the righteous are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God. Because He lives they live also. He is their portion. The righteous God will not suffer the righteous to fall for ever. They fail in drawing the conclusion which their belief in God warrants, and we cannot wonder at it, for life and immortality had not been brought to light by the gospel. Nevertheless, the conclusion which their belief warrants is contained in words they use.

Our Lord reminded His disciples that new wine could not be placed in old wine-skins; and thus the new wine of His doctrine could not find suitable expression in the old Jewish forms and ceremonies. But we find that some new wine can be contained, in part at least, in the words of Old Testament prophets.

* Cf. the lessons for All Saints' Day, Wisdom, chaps. iii. and v.
N.B. The doctrine is not found in Ecclesiasticus.

INSPIRATION

The old skins, *i.e.* the form and ceremonies, were dead ; they could not be stretched ; they were incapable of adaptation. It was otherwise with the prophetic words ; they, being inspired by God, were living, and so could grow to be capable of new and higher meanings.

(2) There is a particular kind of prophetic word which we call "prediction." The prophets shew foresight of the future beyond the power of man. In particular they speak of the Coming Age, and its King, and its characteristics, and their words have received fulfilment. It is probable, we think, that this is really a particular form of the characteristic already considered. But whether this is so or not it deserves separate treatment. The evidence for the truth of Revelation derived from the fulfilment of prophecy has lost much of its force—has been discredited, we might say, by its uncritical use. In order that it may have its due weight it needs restating. We must always bear in mind that if the fulfilment of prophecy is to have any evidential force, *i.e.* force to one who is not a Christian believer, we must clearly prove that the prophetic word was spoken before its fulfilment. Now we cannot prove this, though we may believe it, of many *prima facie* predictions, because we have no means of proving the existence of the books which contain them till after these predictions were fulfilled. Criticism has shewn that the books of the Old Testament have had a long and complicated literary history. They are compilations of materials widely differing in time. Later scribes may have introduced interpolations or corrections into the earlier materials. Such prophecies as that of

Joseph at his death, or of the disobedient prophet to Jeroboam, or of Jeremiah about the seventy years' captivity, cannot be used for evidential purposes.

But all Old Testament predictions are not open to this objection. There is no doubt that the Old Testament in its present form was in existence before the coming of our Lord. That there have been no serious interpolations or corrections made in its books, whether by Christians or by any others, since the second century B.C. is proved by the LXX. translation. So it comes to pass that all those predictions which we find, especially in Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah, of the things which would come to pass in the latter days—the predictions of the Messianic King of the line of David and of the Servant of the Lord—the predictions concerning the kingdom of heaven He would set up—its spiritual characteristics, its universality, its eternity, its peacefulness, its righteousness, its beneficence and the like—were in existence hundreds of years before He came who so marvellously fulfilled them all. The picture of the Saviour who was to come is drawn for us in the Old Testament. We can see its close correspondence with Him who came. Critics may imagine or even prove that the Messianic predictions are, some or all of them, late interpolations in the books in which they are found. That does not alter the fact that they are predictions manifesting a power of anticipating the future beyond that of man.

Great expectations are no uncommon things in the history of nations. Times of prosperity lead men on to hope for still better times. Times of adversity cause men to expect deliverance. But it

is plain that all expectations must have some basis. A nation cannot be most hopeful when all reasonable hope has fled. Israel's expectations differ from all others in this remarkable respect, that they are most noble and magnificent when she is in the greatest danger, or in the depth of adversity. The prophets take as their standpoint the circumstances of their own times, but no foundation in nature or reason can be found for their great expectations, *i.e.* their predictions of the glorious future. The chief prophecies of the Messianic King date from the time when the Assyrian seemed just about to overwhelm the chosen people. One, the stronger part, was going or had gone into captivity, the other and weaker part had no power to resist its mighty foe. The prophets who announced Him told also of the imminent and irreversible ruin of His people. They predict the establishment throughout the world of a Davidic kingdom of a higher and nobler kind just when the Davidic kingdom is tottering to its fall. Jeremiah similarly prophesies of David's Righteous Branch—a king who should reign and prosper and execute judgment and justice in the earth, when the axe was laid at the roots of the Davidic tree, and when Josiah's weak and wicked sons were on the throne. The most magnificent pictures of Israel's office in the world are drawn towards the close of the seventy years' captivity, when the holy cities have become a wilderness, Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem a wilderness, and the holy and beautiful house was burned with fire;* when Israel was a people snared in holes and hid in prison-houses, a prey which none

* Isa. lxiv. 10, 11.

delivered, a spoil of which none said, Restore. How strange it was that the prophet should declare her who sat in darkness to be God's light to the world, and her whom none saved, His salvation to the ends of the earth. We marvel much that the prophet under those circumstances could have been filled with such magnificent hopes, we marvel still more that his hopes should have been abundantly fulfilled. The fulfilment of his vision tarried, but when it came it transcended his expectation. And it was always so. It was not more but less than the truth which the prophet saw afar off. And most undoubtedly it was nothing in the situation or in human power which filled him with his hope. He was always fulfilling the word.

"Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,
And which entered not into the heart of man,
Whatsoever things God prepared for them that
love Him.
But unto us God revealed them through the
Spirit."*

* 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

XIV

THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN THE BIBLE

WE claim to have shown that there are in the Bible many and various indications that it is a book unlike all other books—that for many reasons we are led to pause and say that this or that fact suggests a power more than man's, and even, this is the finger of God. We pass on now to the consideration of a body of facts of a very different kind: facts which show the presence of man, facts which show that the Bible has the characteristics of all books. The remark to be made here seems to be this. The two sets of facts referred to—the one indicating a Divine and the other a human character—though opposite, are not contrary, the one to the other. It is most important to lay stress on this point. It is commonly ignored both by apologists and opponents of the Bible considered as a Divine Revelation. It has commonly been assumed by both that anything in the nature of error or imperfection in the Bible was a proof positive that it was not Divine. Does, then, the presence and the effective presence of man imply the absence of God? Are we prepared to maintain that a Divine work cannot be human also? The Jew Philo, when describing the inspiration of the prophet as he conceived it,

made use of these remarkable words: "It is not meet and right (*ἀθέμιτον*) that the mortal should dwell with the immortal." There could not be two suns in the sky at the same time. When the Divine light shone the human light set. Now, we may find some excuse for Philo as a Jew of the Old Covenant, when he says this; but what believer in Christ, the Son of God, could say any such thing? He Himself, in His own person, proves that it is not so. It was the Divine pleasure that in Him God and man should be united, and through Him the Tabernacle of God is with men evermore. Those who assert that one and the same thing cannot have Divine perfections and human imperfections must be asked whether they do not believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was both Very God and Very Man. We claim, then, that the proofs of human handiwork, omissions, limitations, imperfections, errors, and the like, which we are about to allege, are not to be regarded as if they were the case for the other side—the case against Revelation. We are not, as in a lawsuit, to balance one set of facts against another, and decide which set on the whole has preponderating value. They prove that, on the contrary, the Bible has two characteristics—Divine and human. The Bible is like man himself; it has a soul and a body. His nature is composite, and the facts that he is both a natural and a spiritual being are not, as we all acknowledge, contradictory, but complementary. Or, to take another illustration, the Bible has the nature of a sacrament. It has its outward and visible part, as well as its inward and spiritual grace. And it is

to be observed that it is impossible for us to separate the Divine and the human portions. We could not purify, so to speak, the Bible from its human elements. The human is the means whereby we receive the Divine. To take away the human is to lose grasp of the Divine. And is not this a law which governs our world? Where is to be found the simply and purely spiritual thing? Every spiritual thing to be a reality to us must become incarnate. So saying, we do not deny the reality of purely spiritual things, but their reality to ourselves. When a man dies, *i.e.* when his spirit loses its material embodiment, we are unable any longer to hold communion with him.* Our conclusion is that the Divine Revelation, according to the laws of our creation, must needs have a material body; that being given to man, that material body must needs be of a human kind. Being human, it partakes of the nature of man, and also of man as he is—a man who has not yet reached his perfection, and, what is much more, man who has had his natural powers weakened and darkened by sin.

The pointing out of various human imperfections or errors in the Bible is not a pleasant task. But it must not be shirked if we are to know what our Bibles really are. It is an act of folly to shut our eyes and refuse the succour which our reason affords. And if we may be allowed to say so, there is a kind of pleasure which we may derive from the contemplation of imperfections in the Bible. Standing firm on the Rock of our Faith, fully assured that the Bible is the Word of God, having known and

* The spiritualists, no doubt, deny this.

experienced in some small way what the Bible is amongst books and in our life, we exult in the exceeding grace of God by which He has allowed our brother men, of like passions and weaknesses with ourselves, to be His co-operators in this Divine work. Even as the humiliation of the Son of God into the form of a man is in itself and to ourselves His surpassing glory, so is the humiliation of Divine truth in its expression by human persons and human words. It assures us that man can know God, and that he can utter what he knows.

XV

THE COMPOSITION OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE A WORK OF MAN

WHAT do the books of the Bible themselves tell us, concerning the manner of their composition? The information given us is scantier than we could wish. Concerning many books nothing definite can be said. Our knowledge must be acquired by careful study, and much of it may be little better than plausible hypotheses. But we have definite information in certain cases which will supply us with clues for a wider generalization.

A general remark may be made at the outset which we think the available facts will verify as we proceed. Hardly anywhere do we find reason to think that God provided the sacred writers with materials for their books. A possible exception to this statement is the law of Moses, which we may think from the language used came directly from God. It corresponds to the Koran in the direct inspiration claimed by it. We shall consider this more fully later on. At present, we may make this general statement. The sacred writers are sparing in their citation of authorities even when they are obviously using them, but when they do refer to any, we gather that they get their materials in the ordinary way.

The plainest account of the composition of any sacred book is to be found, we think, in the preface of St. Luke's Gospel. In it St. Luke describes his subject, his purpose, his qualifications, and his methods of work. He was doing what many had attempted to do before him, viz. draw up a narrative of the things which had been fulfilled amongst Christians. There is a silent comparison of his work with theirs. His is more complete and trustworthy; still we should not gather that St. Luke thought his account to differ from theirs in kind. Though not an eyewitness of Christ's life personally, he had received his information from those who had been both eyewitnesses and ministers of the word from the beginning. He thus received his knowledge of facts from men and not God. Thus his authorities, though first-rate, are simply human. His knowledge he further tells us, was continuous from the very beginning, it was complete, and it was exact. He thus became competent, from a human point of view, to draw up an orderly account of those facts in which Theophilus had been instructed by word of mouth. We notice that whilst St. Luke is careful to point out his competency for the task he is undertaking, he claims no Divine Inspiration for himself, and no Divine command. "It seemed good to me also," he says. This is very different from what we find in the Old Testament sometimes. "Write this for a memorial in a book;"* or "Take thee a roll of a book and write therein."† We do not in the least intend to deny St. Luke's inspiration. But we should not go to his preface to prove it. And that preface is

* Exod. xvii. 14.

† Jer. xxxvi. 2

wholly misleading if St. Luke's share in the writing of his Gospel was not substantial. He was, it is plain, no mere automaton or penman of the Holy Spirit. He does not write, as Ezra is said to have done, in ecstasy. His mental powers and his research and his special opportunities had much to do in the making and in the value of his Gospel. He used the methods, and took the pains, natural to a careful and faithful historian. It is well worthy of notice that in the clearest account given us in the Bible of the composition of any of its books, man's part in the work is clearly stated.

St. Mark also was not an eye-witness. We have an account of the composition of his Gospel from the very early writer, Papias. Mark neither heard the Lord nor followed Him, but he was Peter's companion, and heard Peter's teaching. This teaching was framed to meet the wants of his hearers, but was not a connected narrative of the Lord's words. In due course Mark became Peter's interpreter, *i.e.* he committed to writing what Peter taught. In that capacity he wrote accurately all that he remembered—all the things that were said and done by Christ. He made no mistake, but his narrative was not orderly. He wrote things down as they came to his mind. This is Papias' account of the composition of the second Gospel. Here again we find that the evangelist derives his materials from human sources, and he commits them to writing in a practical, but not an ideally perfect way. It would be impossible to regard St. Peter's interpreter as the Holy Ghost's penman. There is nothing of ecstasy in St. Mark's work. Modern criticism has not as yet solved the Synoptic problem, but it has collected

materials for so doing and has arrived at certain preliminary results. It has shown that the three Synoptic Gospels are not original compositions, that is, that there is something lying at the back of them. The Evangelists used original sources and put them into shape. In other words, the historian of our Lord's life acted as all historians are wont to do. It has been already noticed that they seem to have been endued by God with the inspiration of selection. That inspiration did not set them free from the necessity of care and research, or from the use of materials collected by other men. The human element in the composition of the Gospels is real and substantial. The last remark is obviously true also of the Gospel of St. John.

We pass on to the Acts, and we find reason to believe that it is written by a man who is sometimes an eyewitness of the events he records, and sometimes is not. It is natural that a writer who derives his information partly from personal observation, and partly from sources extraneous to himself, should describe the things he personally saw with much greater fulness and exactitude of detail. Now fulness and exactitude of detail are characteristic of St. Luke's "we" sections. The Acts, we infer, is a narrative written in the ordinary way, and with the use of ordinary means of information. Inspiration did not change the natural order and give St. Luke as full a knowledge of the events from which he was absent, as of the events at which he was present.

Passing on to the Epistles we can readily see that, whilst the Divine truths contained in them may be and are taught to all generations of Christian

people, they themselves are such that they could only be written in one, and that the first Christian generation. They have an eternal and so Divine character, but they have a temporal and human character as well. The Epistles were written to meet the particular wants of particular times of particular Churches. The Divine Inspiration renders them capable of meeting needs of all generations of all the Church. In particular, in the case of St. Paul's Epistles, we can also see that they all arose out of historical events which can never occur again. We observe in them not only his circumstances and the circumstances of the Church to which He was writing, but also himself—his personal feelings, human passions, zeal, indignation, love, sorrow, and the like. These are not always of the highest morality. Paul was a man of like passions with ourselves.*

And to take one further instance only from the New Testament—the Revelation of St. John. This has peculiar value for our present purpose, because it differs in character from all the other New Testament books. Narratives and letters are things which men write in the natural order, using ordinary materials. The Revelation is something essentially supernatural, *i.e.* a heavenly vision. St. John is in the Spirit, it is not earthly things which he sees, or men of earth of whom he speaks, but heavenly beings, Angels and Spirits of men departed, and God Himself. The material of the Revelation is, in consequence, of a more spiritual and heavenly character than that of the other New Testament books. And yet how much of the human author there is in it! The Greek is the

* Cf. Sanday, "Inspiration," p. 357.

Greek of a man who does not know Greek well, and cannot write it accurately. The imagery is derived from the Old Testament and former Jewish Apocalypses. It betrays the limitations natural to an uncultivated Jew. Take two instances of this. St. John says that in the new heavens and the new earth, there shall be no more sea. This is of course imagery or parable, and it is unnecessary to consider here its spiritual significance. But how natural it was for a Jew to write thus, who never looked on the sea with loving eyes. The Jewish prophet Isaiah made the troubled sea the image of wickedness, and the ideal sea he described as one on which no gallant ship passed—a desert waste, a shipless sea. The sea to a Jew was a barrier of separation, and not a means of communication. There is no word equivalent to "port" in the Hebrew language. Had St. John been an Englishman would he have pictured the new heavens and new earth as lacking in his sea? And again in St. John's description of the new Jerusalem, we find no beauty of form. The splendour is barbaric. There is no architecture, all its glory consists of richness of materials. The city is four square, and indeed a perfect cube. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. Our taste is offended by the stiffness of this shape. The writer has made Solomon's temple his type. His mind had not been educated to appreciate beauty of form. There seem to be thus clear proofs of a substantial human element even in the record of the Vision of St. John.

Then, passing back to the Old Testament, we find there a greater variety in the kinds of inspired book than in the New. The Divine teaching takes hold

of every kind of human life and activity, and naturally, in the many generations over which the Old Testament is spread, there are very many points of contact. There is law, and there is history and narrative ; there is exhortation and prediction ; there is prayer and thanksgiving ; there is wisdom, and there is apocalypse as well. It is far more difficult in most cases to trace the materials, and to determine the methods of composition in the Old than in the New Testament. We are dealing with very ancient books—books which had a long history, now wholly lost. Critics think that they can trace the workings of many hands in most of the Old Testament books. However that may be, careful study convinces us that Inspiration, whatever effect it produces, does nothing in the way of creating its own materials. Divine thoughts and truths come to the inspired prophets by vision, or otherwise ; but these, when published among men, are clothed in the prophets' own words. Taking the histories and narratives first, some of the books, Kings and Chronicles, constantly quote original authorities. Express quotations are rare in the earlier histories, but traces of implicit quotations are clear enough. Ezra and Nehemiah resemble the earlier books in this respect. They refer their readers to the annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah, and other books, for fuller information. It seems to follow clearly that the knowledge of the facts recorded was acquired in an ordinary way. It is not reasonable that the writer who had made a book out of information revealed him by God would refer for fuller knowledge to simply human books. We arrive at the same result when we note the

character of much that is recorded. There is a great deal of what we may call scaffolding or framework in Kings—matter such as would naturally be found in annals of kingdoms, genealogies, and the like. One cannot think such things would be subjects of Divine communication. Their function is to hold the narratives of Israel's history together; they are the bones and skin—might we not say?—belonging to the meat of God's words.

Much, then, of the materials of the histories is undoubtedly human in its origin. Is it not reasonable to infer that the rest may be? We have other reasons for thinking it, for though many results of the Higher Criticism are uncertain and are nothing better than clever guesses, there is one result which seems quite certain, viz. that the Old Testament histories and narratives, like the Gospels, are compositions of different documents, and, unlike the Gospels, these documents are of very different dates. They are, further, compositions put together with very little literary art. The editors did very little in the way of harmonizing their materials. They put side by side narratives not quite consistent with one another, or, at least, not apparently consistent with one another, and they leave the discrepancies unexplained.

This point should be brought out in some detail. The two Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (which are really one book), are plainly and obviously compositions—compositions put together with very small literary skill.* Most of the documents quoted or used are

* Cf. Neh. viii. 2 (where had Ezra been all this time?) and Neh. xiii. 1, 6. We are not told of Nehemiah's departure till after his return.

written in Hebrew, but some are in Aramaic. Very abruptly one document ends, very abruptly another begins. We are told about the beginnings of the missions of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, but not their ends. We know not what came of any of those three leaders. Two considerable sections of the book are composed in the first person, but the first person of one section is not the first person of the other. In Ezra and Nehemiah, also, national records and royal edicts are combined with the personal memoirs.

In the Book of Kings the sections relating to Elijah and Elisha come from different sources, and are written on different lines to the rest of the book. The king, contrary to custom, is not the centre of the narrative. There is a section of peculiar character, also, relating to the building of the temple.

In Samuel several sources have been traced. What seems pretty clear is that duplicate narratives stand side by side. There seem to be two accounts of the introduction of David to Saul's court which cannot be harmonized. There would appear, also, to be two narratives of the establishment of the kingdom.

In Judges the two sections at the end of the book differ in character from the rest. They are narratives without a hero, and they refer to the earliest days of the Judges. In the body of the book we find ancient narratives embedded in a moral setting, which shows how they illustrate a moral sequence of events. The setting and the narrative can be easily distinguished. The Book of Judges has two beginnings, moreover. It begins the first time with the events which

immediately followed Joshua's death ; then, in ch. ii. 6, Joshua's last act and his death are recorded.

It is needless to refer to the composite character of the Hexateuch. Critics have discredited their case by attempting too minute discriminations ; but there are clear indications of a document in which the interests are priestly and genealogical. This gives Genesis its framework and its magnificent first section, and in it we find fully developed Israel's sacrificial system. There is another document which is hortatory in style. It abounds in exhortations to Israel to keep the laws and commandments given them by God. There is a third document, itself a combination of two according to the critics, in which we find those beautiful stories of the patriarchs, which have interested and instructed so many generations of Christians. It is unnecessary for our purpose to consider the signs of greater elaboration. It is plain that the book, composed of P, D, and J, E, passed through many hands before it reached its present form. The human element in the Hexateuch must have been very considerable. We have already seen reasons for thinking that the first chapters in Genesis have for their groundwork primitive stories which are not the special property of the Jews, and we have traced the hand of God in regard to them, not in their origin, but in their purification. Nowhere in the Book of Revelation is Divine power more clearly manifested than in that age-long process which divided the precious from the base, and elaborated from the mire of Babylonian mythology the Hebrew stories of Creation, the Fall, and the Flood.

The human element in the prophetic writings is

not less substantial than in the histories and narratives. The Hebrew prophet has a personality of his own ; though he speaks words which are very truly not his own. He is moved by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of the Lord rushes upon him and constrains him at times to speak words contrary to his natural wishes. In the words of Jeremiah, "I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His Name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." The true prophet is very conscious of the Divine power working within him, he is also conscious of the dignity of his office amongst men. He may passively receive words from God in dreams and visions and the like, but he is an active and intelligent agent when prophesying to his people. He does not, however, always receive his message in ecstasy. Isaiah's political power and wisdom, for example, show us how inspiration enabled a prophet to discern the affairs of the people and the nations with marvellous insight. What Isaiah saw was the political situation as it really was. The Divine Spirit does not carry the prophet away so that he is beside himself, it quickens his natural powers so that he is above himself. He sees what there is to see, other men comparatively are blind. Even as the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost made the Apostles, of whom previously little that is great and noble had been recorded, able ministers of the New Covenant, so the power of the Lord made the prophets the greatest Israelites of their day. But they retain their consciousness when they are most conscious of God and

His will. They are men of the age as well as men of God. They never cease to be competent to distinguish their own thoughts and desires from the Divine influences and directions. They have their own wishes even when they declare the will of God. So the prophets' words and deeds though God's are also essentially their own. And yet, surely, we are not wrong in saying that the prophets' words have more of the Divine in them—give to us more directly a Divine Revelation than any other words in the Old Testament.

How the word of the Lord came to the prophet we do not know. We may conjecture with very considerable probability that it did not come always in the same way. It is plain, however, that, like the Apostle, the prophet is not simply the messenger, but is also the delegate of his God. Isaiah at his inaugural vision receives his inspiration and also his message ; but that message was only the fundamental idea underlying his subsequent very various prophetic utterances. The inaugural vision of Ezekiel teaches us a similar truth. Ezekiel digests the Divine words given to him and utters them to his people in a digested form. "Son of man, hear what I say to thee. Open thy mouth and eat that I give to thee." Then a roll of the book is put in Ezekiel's hand, and he is caused to eat the roll. The command follows, "Go, speak unto the house of Israel." First he must eat, then he must speak. If Ezekiel had been commanded to read the roll put in his hands by God a very different idea of inspiration would have been conveyed to us. Jeremiah is commanded to read a roll in the ears of the people assembled in the Lord's

house, but this was a roll which he had himself first written. That roll, we remember, was burned by the king. The words were re-written and added to. Plainly the book of the prophet Jeremiah was a book of human composition. What is more, it is, in the form it has come down to us, a book of disorderly composition.

It is hardly necessary to say anything of the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The Old Testament wisdom is obviously the expression of the human mind under Divine guidance. We might call it human reflections on Divine truths. The mind of man assisted by the Spirit of God—the Spirit of Wisdom—broods over Divine rules and principles and also over the events occurring round him and embodies his thoughts in pithy sayings. There is a great deal of human reason in the proverb, but it is reason sanctified by God. There was a theory of Inspiration held by some in early times according to which the human reason departed from a man when the Divine Spirit entered within him. When a man prophesied he was out of his mind.* The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes indicate to us very clearly that this theory of Inspiration is false.

It is perhaps in the Psalms that the most conclusive indication of a substantial human element in the Old Testament or, indeed, the Bible is to be found. What are the Psalms? Divine? Most surely. David said, "The Spirit of God spake by me, and His word was on my tongue." The New Testament quotes the Psalms as many times as all the other Old Testament books taken together, and it very often calls them

* *Amentia in quod constat prophetia.* Tertullian : "De Anima," 21.

words of the Psalmist "in the Spirit," or even words of the Spirit Himself. The Saviour, by His use of the Psalter on various occasions, more especially on the Cross, hallows it for all who bear the Christian name. The Church also, whether of the Old or New Covenant, makes it the staple of her liturgical services. And besides the hearts of all good people for more than two thousand years set to their seal, that through the Psalms God speaks to them and they speak to God. Penitential Psalms are to be found in the sacred literature of other ancient nations, and yet none equal the Hebrew in the depth of their sense of sin. The others are hardly more than guesses or fears that the Deity is angry ; these are the outcome of a knowledge that the writer and his nation have sinned against a personal and well-known God who is their own. Moreover, Hebrew Psalms are not merely penitential, they express every spiritual feeling in turn, and change from one to another with the rapidity of human thought. Whether it is worship or thanksgiving, supplication or penitence, joy or sorrow, they give us words by which we can rise to God. And all ages and peoples have recognized their value. Their sound has gone forth unto all lands and their words unto the ends of the world. Not being of use in those matters wherein Christians differ they have appealed to the hearts of all Christians alike. Manuals of devotion, however excellent, have but a short day, the Psalter of the Old Covenant remains a Christian book of prayer and praise. It furnishes in large part the substance of Christian hymns. Ideas distinctively Christian find in it appropriate expression. The Scriptures of the New

Covenant need to do little in the way of supplementing the book of the Psalms of David. We can thus claim that there is no Old Testament writing to whose Divine inspiration such strong and abundant and varied and abiding witness is given.

But are not the words of the Psalms human also? If they were not, should we be able to use them so constantly, so generally, and so well? They are Divine aspirations fitted for human use. They express human feelings—feelings which men having felt, men feel again. They are Divine because they are so human; that is, because they are suitable for man to use when he rises to the full height of his being, realizes his Divine origin and His Divine goal, and claims his right of access to God. Wherein lies the difference between a man and a brute beast but in his power to hold communion with his God? Children of God and man the Psalms are, we make bold to say. Divine; human—God their Father, and man their mother—they partake manifestly of the characters of both parents. So good, for so full of God; not so good as they might be, for so full of man. Rising to God on eagle's wings, and gazing on His face as the eagles on the sun, and then falling back to earth again with blinded eyes. Not purely or directly Divine; how could such groanings, complaints, passions and doubts be so called? It is the human spirit, though that spirit is groping and longing after God, which calls, "Awake, why sleepest thou? Arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?"* "Hath God forgotten to be

* Ps. xliv. 23, 24.

gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"* It is again the human spirit, faithful and true, but not yet wholly enlightened, which asks, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, which hate Thee?" It is again the human will, not thoroughly conformed to the Divine, which says, "Let them be wiped out of the book of the living, and not be written amongst the righteous?" "Lord, I believe," many a Psalm seems joyfully to begin, yet, ere its close it is constrained to add with grief, "Help Thou mine unbelief."

This is not as it should be, though it is, as we know, as it must be for man in this state of imperfection. The Psalms are not songs of angels—"Clearer loves sound other ways"—but children's cries in the dark. Nevertheless we have good reason to say that when we are silent God in heaven says, "I miss My little human praise; nor day nor night now brings the voice of My delight." Capable of use by men, worthy of acceptance in their use by God, are the Psalms; and this, because they are so human.

But what an unreal and Docetic character it gives these expressions of human desires and experiences, if we regard them as "dictated" by the Holy Spirit. A prayer, a thanksgiving, a petition must be in the deepest sense a man's own. God does not dictate our thoughts and feelings, though he may inspire them. Man gives his own expression to his own heart's desires. The Holy Spirit, and the human spirit at its best, but not always at its best, met and co-operated in the making of the Psalms, and nowhere can we see more clearly the human spirit

* Ps. lxxvii. 9.

making the Divine Spirit its own. Nevertheless, the words are not always good, and the feelings are not always the highest and purest. It is surely true to say that neither God, being what He is, nor man, being what he is, could have made the Psalms alone.

The phenomena of the Psalms may be illustrated from nature. To what first causes should we trace the plants which spring out of the ground? There is the seed, we know, and there is the sun in the sky, there is the air and the rain, but there is mother earth as well. And the seed itself has had the earth for its mother in days gone by. Even so are the Psalms upspringing from the human heart. The seed of the Word of God had been sown, but there was something human even in that seed. The sweet heavenly influence, such as the light and love of God, made the seed to germinate. But besides all this there was the soil, itself, which, being good soil, was not left uncultivated by the heavenly husbandman. The particular nature of the soil gave, we observe, a particular character to that plant—that feeling and desire which sprang up towards God. Nay, had not that soil been good, spite of the Divine seed and sun no plant had sprung up at all. We see here co-operation in the full sense of the word, action and reaction—interaction we might say. We cannot, however, be false witnesses for God by maintaining that the curses of Psalms 69 and 109, and the like, are after His mind, they are after the imperfectly developed Jewish mind. We will not place side by side with our Lord's beatitudes that beatitude with which the 137th Psalm concludes. It will be seen that the analogy

drawn from nature is specially applicable to the words of the Psalms. Words of the Prophets and words of the Psalms, both inspired, differ widely in their purposes. Words of the Prophets are as seeds sown, or as the sun's rays; they are God's words to us. But the Psalms are the plants which spring up in our hearts from the Divine seed; they are reflections of the Divine rays. They are our words to God, our responses to His teaching, His light and His life.

The character of the human element in one important section of the Old Testament literature, viz., the section of laws, still remains to be considered.

The laws of Moses differ *prima facie* in the character of their materials from the other books of the Old Testament. They are apparently given to Moses in the same way as the laws of the Koran to Mahomet, *i.e.*, represented as dictated in substance and in language by God Himself. The ceremonial laws are commonly introduced with the formula. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak to the children of Israel," and the like. Minute details concerning ceremonies or institutions, or the tabernacle and its furniture, follow. All things were to be made according to the pattern shown by God on the Mount. We know, also, that the Ten Words are described as uttered by the voice of God, and written with His finger. The sacred narrative also regards the inspiration of Moses as differing in character from the inspiration of the prophets. God spake to Moses face to face, and mouth to mouth, as a man speaketh unto his friend. He did not make Himself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream. There

hath not arisen, says the writer of the last words of Deuteronomy, a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.* Such passages seem to claim that Moses was God's penman, and that consequently the law was verbally inspired.

The phrase, however, "God spake," or "the Lord said," and their like, always need interpretation. God has many ways of speaking. The words "face to face,"† and "mouth to mouth," demand limitation, and especially when we have regard to the words "Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live." The words quoted express in strong terms the truth that Israel received its law from God through Moses; but we see they express something other than verbal dictation. For there are good reasons for saying that Israel's law was not verbally dictated. (1) What was the exact form of those words which God spake to Israel from Mount Sinai, and wrote with His finger on the two tables of stone? We have two versions of them, one in Exodus, and the other in Deuteronomy; and the two differ widely in language, though they are identical in meaning.‡ No verbal inspiration can therefore be claimed for the Ten Words. (2) The Mosaic laws, (*a*) were largely the systematization of earlier laws and institutions of Israel, (*b*) were derived partially from earlier codes and institutions of foreign nations. In some the influence of Egypt can be traced, and some

* Exod. xxxiii. 11. Numb. xii. 6-8. Deut. xxxiv. 10.

† It should be noted that Deut. v. 4 says the Lord spake with Israel also, face to face on the mount, out of the midst of the fire.

‡ Cf. Exod. xx. 1-17, xxxi. 18, with Deut. v. 6-22. The second writing was the same as the first; cf. Exod. xxxiv. 1; Deut. x. 4.

are very similar to laws contained in the code of Hammurabi. (3) Criticism seems to have proved the existence of different codes in the law, and it would not be difficult to place side by side laws from these codes which, though they refer to the same matters, differ from one another in character. Our reason seems to prove to us that the laws are not all equally Mosaic, and our faith acknowledges that all are not equally Divine. Moses, there is good reason to say, is rightly regarded as the source of law in Israel, and Moses was Divinely instructed to give Israel statutes and judgments. He who gives the seed may be said to give the plant. He who lays down the great principles of a code may be regarded as responsible for their developments and embodiments. The laws of the Pentateuch may be regarded as Divine primarily, and Mosaic secondarily; but they can hardly be either immediately. They may be both in spirit, but cannot be either wholly, whether in matter or word.

And we shall be ready to admit this if we give due weight to the following consideration. If it be true that the laws of the Pentateuch come more directly from God, are absolutely and exclusively Divine, and this in a way no other words of the Sacred Book can be said to be; if, consequently, they have less of the human, and so of the finite, the passing, the imperfect, in them than other words, we shall be involved in this difficulty: the words externally most Divine in the Bible will be the least so internally; or, to put it still more strongly, the words in the Bible which are absolutely Divine will not be eternal. Can it be true that the weak and beggarly elements of the law, as

St. Paul calls them, and the words of the Covenant, which eighteen hundred years ago were decaying and waxing old, and ready to vanish away, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, are absolutely or even pre-eminently free from the taint of human imperfection, and are wholly and exclusively the words of God? To believe this is well-nigh to subvert the faith of the gospel. It seems plain that the words "The Lord spake unto Moses," and the like, must not be so interpreted as to annihilate the human element in the laws and institutions which succeed.

Summing up the facts bearing on this part of our subject, we may say that the traces of the human mind and spirit in the formation of the sacred books of the Bible meet us at every turn, and that there is very little trace of ecstasy on the part of the human writer, or of dictation on the part of God. Prophets and apostles receive revelations at times in visions and dreams, but it is in their waking moments that they speak or write the Divine words. Nor can they be compared rightly to musical instruments, on which the Spirit plays. The co-workers with God in the formation of the sacred writings are not passive, but active instruments. The human element in the Bible is, indeed, more obvious than the Divine. The indications of the Divine Inspiration lie beneath the surface, and must be spiritually discerned. In other words, man supplies the Bible with its body, the Holy Spirit only with its soul.

There are three stories or legends with which we may usefully contrast what we have observed about the composition of the books of the Bible. The first

refers to the composition of the Koran ; the second to the rewriting of the Old Testament by Ezra ; and the third to the translation of the Old Testament into Greek by the seventy interpreters.

The Koran makes a definite claim as to how it was composed—which the Bible never does.* Sir W. Muir tells us that “ It professes to be a revelation proceeding immediately from the Almighty. Its contents are nowhere subjective ; that is, they nowhere represent the aspirations of an inspired heart, or the teachings of a prophet himself enlightened of God. Word for word, the revelation comes direct from heaven. The formula, ‘ Speak, thus saith the Lord,’ either precedes every single sentence, or must be so understood.” As a result of this direct claim, the style of the Koran is said to be perfect, and every syllable Divine. The text, further, is incorruptible. It is an absolute authority, not only in religion and ethics, but also in law, science, and history. Nevertheless, Mahomet acknowledges that two lines in it allowing idolatry were suggested by the evil one.† Discrepancies between the different revelations are obvious. Now, it is conceivable that God should abrogate a command, but it is not possible that two revelations made by Himself concerning Himself can be inconsistent. A theory had to be propounded that a later revelation abrogated an earlier. “ Whatever verses We cancel or cause thee to forget, We give thee better in their stead, or the like thereof.”‡

Again, in the apocryphal 2 Esdras, § we have a Jewish legend of the restoration of the Holy

* “The Koran” (S.P.C.K.), pp. 12.

† Ibid, p. 14. ‡ Ibid, p. 41. § Chap. xiv. 21, 22.

Scriptures after they had perished at the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Esdras complains, "Thy law is burnt, therefore no man knoweth the things that are done of Thee, or the works that shall be done. But if I have found grace before Thee, send the Holy Ghost unto me, and I shall write all things that have been done in the world since the beginning, which were written in Thy law." The request is granted. Esdras drinks of a full cup, and he has understanding given him, and his mouth is opened, and he dictates night and day continually to five men for forty days, and they write two hundred and four books; twenty-four of which (the books of the Old Testament Canon) are to be published, and the rest hidden. There was also a belief current in the Early Church that the Septuagint version of the Old Testament was a miraculous translation. The LXX. translators, it was said, translated all the books of the Old Testament, separately or in pairs, being shut up in cells for that purpose. Nevertheless, they produced seventy translations, which agreed, not only in sense, but in form, not differing the slightest, either in word or in order of words. The King of Egypt, Ptolemy Philadelphus, who was employing them, was astonished at this exact agreement, and ascribed it to the power of the Divine Spirit. This story is often referred to by the Fathers, and influences their exegesis of the Septuagint. One of them, Pseudo-Justin, indeed, claims to have seen the cells. But Jerome, who was a Hebrew scholar, asks, Who by his lying has built those cells, and draws a distinction between translation and prophecy? The LXX. translation notoriously contains many errors. It was not all

translated at the same time, or by the same men. Its text has been so constantly altered by later translators or transcribers that it is impossible to recover it in its original form.

Now it is clear, as we have seen, that Holy Scripture was neither written nor composed in any such way. The three accounts have two points in common with one another. The human element is minimized. Inspiration is equivalent to Dictation. And they are all idle legends, manifestly untrue.

Mahomet is the mere penman of the Koran. Everything in the Koran comes directly from God, and is infallibly true. But the method intended to secure infallibility and accuracy avowedly breaks down. Mahomet owns himself deceived. An infallible revelation has to be received as well as given. Though the infallible God gives it, fallible man receives it. Where can be the infallible certainty that the revelation comes from God, and is not the outcome of the man's own heart, or a delusion from the evil one? It is plain that the Koran, since it is delivered to Mahomet in this way, and nevertheless contains palpable errors in history, science, and the rest, discredits itself.

Ezra, similarly, is described as an automaton, and not a co-worker with God. He has no intelligent share in the re-writing of the Sacred Scriptures. The story is obviously contrary to the statements of the Book of Ezra, which describe the Law as in use in the days of Zerubbabel, seventy or eighty years before Ezra came from Babylon. Curiously enough, the story was accepted by many of the Fathers, and

even Bellarmine thinks there is some truth in it. Still more curiously, it might be said to express in enigmatic form the critical conclusions of the present day. Ezra is not, indeed, the inspired re-writer; but he is the editor of many books of the Old Testament, and he is the author of the Priest Code.

The account of the origin of the Septuagint translation is flatly contradicted by the translation itself. We are able to trace, in some measure, the growth of the legend. It is nothing but a piece of Hellenistic pride.

All three accounts imply a mode of composition of which we have no trace in the Old or New Testaments. The sacred writers bringing, as they do, their own individualities and limitations and circumstances into their books, cannot have been mere "penmen of the Holy Ghost."

XVI

THE CANON AND THE TEXT OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

WE have traced the human element in the composition of the different books in the Bible, and have seen that it is substantial in character. We pass on now to the composition of the Bible as a whole—the combination of its several books into one—the formation of the Canon of Scripture.

The Bible, as we know, is a collection of many books of different times and authorship. How, when, and by whom were they collected together? Who was it that decided that this book should be admitted into the collection, and that book excluded? We have been wont to acquiesce, without doubt or inquiry, in the contents of the Old and New Testaments. We should consider it almost profane and unbelieving to doubt whether this or that book should be included in the Bible. We are accustomed to think that all the books of the Bible are marked off by a clear line—even more, separated by a deep gulf from all other writings. Books of the Bible are inspired, the rest are not. Books of the Bible are the words of God, all others are words of man. But what reasons

have we for this opinion? To answer that the Bible is the gift of God, is not helpful. The question we have to answer is, How did God give it? How, that is to say, were the different elements of the Bible gathered together and separated from all other books?

We should, without doubt, like to have a very clear and straightforward answer to this question; but none such can be given. The history of the formation of the Canon, both of the Old and of the New Testament, is doubtful and obscure. There is a lack of definiteness and formality about it which is disappointing. There are, it need hardly be said, no solemn acts of delivery by God of His Book into the hands of man. Nor are there solemn decisions of the Church, whether of the Old Covenant or of the New, in regard to the contents of the Book which directed and governed her life. The Canon of Scripture grows, but it is difficult or impossible to follow the stages of its growth. The Canon is at length fixed, but its settlement cannot be ascribed to any precise act. Bishop Westcott has said that the historical facts teach us that the formation of the collection of Holy Scriptures was—to use a term which ought never to be supposed even to veil the action of a Present God—according to natural laws; that slowly and with an ever-deepening conviction the churches received, after trial, and in some cases after doubt and contradiction, the books which we now receive; that the religious consciousness, which was quickened by the words of prophets and apostles in turn, ratified their writings.*

* Westcott, "The Bible in the Church," Preface, pp. x., xi.

There can be no doubt that history compels us to acknowledge that the formation of the Canon was a work of the human judgment—a judgment expressed without the precision we might have wished. It was the Church, not so much by her synods, but by a general consensus, gradually arrived at and expressed in public use, which defined the limits of the Canon. We receive our Bible from the Church. It is true that many Protestant sects who reject the Church's authority have said that the Bible is its own sufficient witness, *i.e.* that its books testify by their contents that they were written by the Spirit of God. There is considerable truth in this. Undoubtedly some books of the Bible witness powerfully to their Divine origin. But can this be said of all? The historical books, for example: can we discern for ourselves their inspiration with clearness and certainty? Do they differ in kind from the First Book of the Maccabees? There are doubtful books in both Canons, Old and New, *i.e.* books admitted into the Canon after much hesitation and doubt. Such are Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Esther in the Old Testament, and II. Peter pre-eminently in the New Testament. Comparing these carefully with books outside the Canon—the books of the Maccabees, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and the First Epistle of Clement—it would certainly be beyond our power to say without a shadow of doubt, "These books are inspired, and those are not." Our reasons would, at the best, be subjective in character. Our only reasonable course we shall find, is to acquiesce in the judgment of the Church.

The matter is, after all, of little practical importance.

As we have seen, there is a Bible within the Bible —a Bible which we read again and again, from which we have received our knowledge of Divine and heavenly things, and this does not include all the books of the Canon. Some books we find to be of little use to us, and this is not entirely due to their obscurity or difficulty, or again, to the one-sidedness of our belief; but it is due also to the fact that the books of the Canon are not equally full of instruction.

We might have expected that the Canon of Holy Scripture would have been given to us by a direct revelation from God—that He would have indicated to us, in some unmistakable and supernatural way, the constituent elements of His Book of Revelation. We should like Him to have done this, because we have a craving for certainty in all these matters—a certainty, by the way, which we can never attain. But how could this have been done? By a prophet speaking in the name of the Lord? Can we conceive any way in which the prophet could have been accredited to all time? If it is answered, By some miracle, whether a voice from heaven or an attesting sign. These, however convincing to the men who witnessed them, could never have convinced us who did not witness them. We should have wanted a record for that voice, and this, in its turn, would need miraculous attestation. If, again, the authority of the Bible rested on a miracle, to disprove the miracle would be to deprive the Bible of all authority; to make the miracle doubtful would be to cast doubt on the Bible. The Canon, however, has not been Divinely revealed to us, and it is difficult to see how

it could have been. Its settlement was the result of research, comparison, weighing of historical evidence, balancing of difficulties. There were doubts as to certain books for hundreds of years, but they gradually disappeared. The Sixth Article of our Church says, "In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." If we take these words literally, we should have to take out of our Bibles three books in the Old Testament and seven in the New; viz. Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs; and Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. There is no doubt felt now concerning the great majority of these books, but this does not alter the fact that up to the fifth century A.D., and in some cases still later, there were doubts concerning their authority in the Church.*

Bishop Westcott, commenting on these historical facts, says, "They teach us that the extreme limits of the collection were not marked out sharply, but that rather the outline was at times dim and wavering, yet not so as to be incapable of satisfactory adjustment." And, "It is possible that we might have wished much of this or all this otherwise; we might have thought that a Bible, of which every part should bear a visible and unquestioned authentication of its Divine origin, separated by a solemn act from the first from the sum and fate of all other literature,

* Professor Sanday says, "By the year 400 we may regard the Old Testament as practically fixed in the form in which we now have it." —Bampton Lectures on "Inspiration," p. 6.

would have best answered our conceptions of what the written records of Revelation should be. *But it is not thus that God works among us. In the Church and in the Bible alike He works through men.* As we follow the progress of their formation, each step seems to be truly human; when we contemplate the whole, we joyfully recognize that every part is also Divine."

Professor Sanday,* treating the matter somewhat differently, says, "If we take our New Testament as a whole, we may well believe that a Divine Providence has watched over it. It is a wonder that in such an age, so little that is in any sense unworthy has found its way into it. But in this, as in other things, the Providence of God does not absolutely exclude the infirmities of man."

The critical investigations of the last fifty years have indeed confirmed very remarkably the decision of the early Church on the contents of its New Testament. The Second Epistle of St. Peter—the book concerning which the early Church was most and longest doubtful—is the book concerning which most doubt is reasonably felt at the present day. There are many reasons for thinking it was not written by St. Peter,† and it claims to have been written by him. The results of criticism on the contents of the New Testament Canon should be regarded by us as reassuring. When critics, at once competent, reverent, and believing, have looked into the matter, they find only one book out of twenty-seven in the New Testament which seems to have

* Bampton Lectures on "Inspiration."

† See Bishop Chase, in Hastings' "Dictionary," Art. "II. Peter,"

been placed in the Canon unadvisedly, and that book is the one concerning which the early Church was most doubtful.

In the Old Testament the limits of doubt are somewhat wider. It is natural that it should be so, because of its earlier date. In many particulars, we think, the evidence for the books of the Old Testament, and for the facts they contained, is inferior to that for the New. We may trace God's hand in this. It is of essential importance to us, as Christians that we should be established in the truth of Christ's words and deeds, so God has given to us four Gospels—four witnesses to these—and each of them, we have good grounds for saying, is contemporaneous, or nearly contemporaneous, with the facts it records. On the other hand, it is not essentially important for us to be certified beyond all doubt concerning the words or deeds of Old Testament prophets and heroes. We find in the Old Testament no deed in human life like the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which forms an article of faith for us. And so it need matter little that for Old Testament facts we have only one witness, mostly, who may have lived long after the events he narrates. It is the general outline of Old Testament history which is of spiritual importance, and this we can trace with sufficient definiteness, though the details may be uncertain. Similarly in regard to the Old Testament Canon, there is much greater uncertainty as to its contents. We cannot say that the Christian Church formed an independent judgment about it, nor indeed that she had qualifications for so doing. She accepted the judgment of the Jewish Church.

Now, we might almost say the Jewish Church gave two judgments, though no doubt one of the two, the Hebrew as distinct from the Hellenistic, is the more authoritative. It is pretty clear that the Canon of the Old Testament was gradually built up. The three volumes of the Old Testament—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—were probably three separate stages in its growth. It was practically complete before the coming of the Lord—how much before, whether a hundred years or more, we cannot certainly say. It was not, probably, finally and formally settled till some Rabbinical meetings at Jannea, *circa* 100 A.D. We should observe that the light of the Jewish Church had been put out before she finally decided on her lamp. It is a dying Church, or rather, a dead Church, which finally admits certain books of the Old Testament into the Canon. It is idle to say that we ought to receive with an unquestioning faith decisions of Scribes and Pharisees who rejected Christ. The books doubted in our Lord's time were three only—Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs—and our use of them reflects the doubts felt in early times. They were not, to use Luther's phrase, "of the true marrow and kernel of the Old Testament Scriptures."

Our conclusion, having regard to all the historical facts, is this: the formation of the Canon, whether of the Old or New Testaments, is a work of man; the Church, using ordinary human means of information, decided what books should be included in it. We have good reason for believing that she acted not without Divine help and guidance. We should hardly, however, be able to say that she was specially

inspired to come to a right conclusion. We find good reasons for acquiescing in her judgment as a whole, but we cannot claim infallible certainty for it. There came no voice of God from heaven to tell men the names and numbers of the books which contain His Divine Word.

There is a certain, though not very considerable, element of uncertainty in regard to the books of the Bible, and the same is true in regard to the text. The *ipsissima verba* of the Sacred writings are not now in our possession. We have no original autographs of Law, Prophecy, Gospel or Epistle, or even of the smallest portion of them. Our earliest Greek manuscripts are about three centuries after New Testament times and our earliest Hebrew manuscripts are later by at least one thousand years than any of the Old Testament books. There has certainly been no miraculous preservation of the sacred manuscripts from the textual corruptions which naturally arise in the course of centuries from transmission through human hands.

Now it is quite easy for us to imagine a way in which these corruptions could have been avoided. The sacred writings might have been engraved on rocks, even as Job wished his words might be, as we know the ancient records of other nations actually were. God did not order that so it should be. There is no reason to suppose, in the New Testament at least, that the text has materially suffered. The various readings may indeed be numbered by tens of thousands. But it is said that the worst manuscript does not differ substantially from the best, and that it represents with practical sufficiency the

truth of the Divine Revelation. Still there is a great difference between verbal accuracy and practical sufficiency. In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament it is impossible to speak with such confidence. The earliest manuscripts are very late and all contain one text. The Massorites settled the Hebrew text somewhere about or before the ninth century A.D., and all varying manuscripts were destroyed. There is little doubt that the Hebrew text is corrupt in many places, and we have no adequate material for correcting it. In the latter part of the history of the Hebrew text the very faults of the Jewish Church constituted her a specially trustworthy guardian of the letter of Scripture, and we know that the text from which the Septuagint was translated was substantially though not identically the same as our own. But it was in the early period of the history that important corruptions were most likely to arise, and this is a very long and dark age. There are hundreds of years in which we have no means of tracing the history of the Hebrew text. The earliest sources were, during this time, worked up into the books as we now have them. There seems to have been some editing in the way of the removal of archaic forms and expressions, for there is not so much difference between the earliest and latest Hebrew as we should expect. The system of Hebrew vocalization, it is thought, was gradually developed; this involved modifications in the text. Some time before Christ, —we know nothing of the cause or the circumstances, —the Hebrews changed their letters. Transliteration was likely to introduce changes of greater importance. On the whole, the long dark history of the Hebrew

text in these early ages forbids us to lay stress on isolated expressions or words in the Old Testament. We have no works of Hebrew Fathers whose quotations from the Old Testament help us to correct the manuscripts. The text of the Septuagint Version is so corrupt that it fails to give us the help we might have hoped. There is no reason to believe that the corruptions in the text of the Old Testament incapacitate it from fulfilling its spiritual office. Still we must confess the Old Testament is a very ancient book whose textual history cannot be written.

In view of all these facts the question may be reverently asked, "If it had been of practical importance that we should have an infallible text of God's Revelation, would not God have provided means for securing it to us?" Should not the fact that He has not done so suggest to us that an infallible text is of no great practical importance? We know that St. Paul says, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." We may apply the principle underlying these words in a practical way. We observe further that when greater accuracy was needed greater accuracy was preserved. We derive general lessons mostly from the Old Testament; it is the New Testament which teaches us lessons of a particular kind. Each passage, we may reasonably hope, comes to us with a text sufficiently accurate for the fulfilment of God's gracious purposes to us. The quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament confirm us in this belief. They are mostly taken from a very inaccurate translation, and, speaking generally, verbal accuracy in quotation did not seem to be thought important. The same lack of literal accuracy is

discernible in the quotations from the New Testament in the early Fathers, and they use the Septuagint when quoting the Old. We know, further, that the vast majority of the members of the Church throughout the world must read their Bible in a translation. There is no infallibility in a translator.

XVII

THE IMPERFECTIONS AND ERRORS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

WE claim to have proved that the Bible, though thoroughly Divine, is thoroughly human also. From all of its parts we hear God's voice speaking to us, but everywhere we see also the hand of man. And it is impossible for us to separate the Divine and the human portions. We could not purify the Bible, so to speak, from its human elements. The human is the vehicle of the Divine.

The Bible has indeed the nature of a Sacrament. It has an outward and visible part as well as an inward and spiritual grace, and the outward part is the means whereby we receive the grace. Or to put it in another way, the Divine and the human in the Bible are the soul and body of one living thing. To take away the body is to take away the means of communication with the Spirit. We cannot ordinarily, though the spiritualists may deny the fact, hold communication with the dead.

Now if we go thus far and admit an essentially human character in the Bible, we must not retract our admission and deny the existence in it of the properties of human character. Man being man is capable of being deceived and is liable to mistake.

Infallibility and inerrancy are impossible to man. We naturally recoil from this conclusion. Can it be that there is anything which could be called a mistake in the Word of God? In the Word of God pure and simple there can be no mistake. But of such man has and can have no cognizance. It would be seeing the invisible. It is the Word of God conceived in human thought, expressed in human words, taught by human teachers, transmitted through human hands, that comes to us. As well, it has been said, might a man claim to be immortal in his body as infallible in his mind. The book which is a true product of the human mind must reflect human limitations and imperfections.

It is a trial of our faith to find anything like imperfection in the Bible. But it is well worth noticing that the contemporaries of our Lord's human life and many in later centuries had a similar trial to bear. "Could," men asked, "the Almighty Son of God have really submitted Himself to the limitations, the sufferings, the humiliations inherent in creaturely existence?" Many replied, "No, His Body was not altogether like ours, it came from a different source, it was made of a different kind of stuff. Its needs and sufferings were only in appearance. The Lord's life was a drama, not a reality." Terrible would be the loss to us all if such were the case. We should lose our brotherhood with the Son of God. We could not be assured of His sympathy. The example for human life would disappear, and what would become of the Sacrifice of the Cross? Docetism destroys our Holy Faith, let us beware of introducing it into the Bible. Those who believe that our

Lord was true man, and therefore weak man, should not stagger at the Bible's true humanity or at the imperfections which its humanity involves.

"But where are these imperfections and mistakes?" it may be asked. "It is of no use arguing in an *a priori* way; prove that they actually exist."

Before we endeavour to do this it may be well to make some general remarks. It might be regarded as a piece of gross ingratitude in a man to point out imperfections in that great gift of God to him—the written record of His Revelation. But it will be admitted that it is man's duty to scrutinize the Divine gift, otherwise he will be likely to use it in a wrong way. No one would deny that the Bible has been so wrongly used. We must then examine the Bible with the greatest care. But can we do this and shut our eyes to the results of the examination? Our scrutiny or criticism, it must always be remembered, does not refer to the Divine gift itself, but to the form in which it has come to us.

And if we find errors and imperfections, we shall be so far from mocking at the errors in the Divine Revelation, that we shall wonder at and adore the mystery of the Divine condescension. It is beyond our power to see how it is possible for God to co-operate with weak and sinful man, yet, we see, in many other spheres of the Divine workings that so He does. There are other Divine condescensions than the temporary condescension of the Incarnation; there is the continual condescension in which God deigns to allow His great designs to be disparaged and delayed and spoilt by the co-operation of men not yet fully capable workers, not yet wholly submissive

to His will. It is because our Lord humbled Himself that God gave Him the Name which is above every Name. So the very imperfections of Scripture should be its glory in our eyes.

It should be observed that we have no means of testing the greater number of the statements of a historical nature made in the Bible. It is only occasionally that we can test it by the records of other nations. The Bible has, however, not uncommonly two (or even more in the New Testament) records of the same events. We can compare these together, and see whether they are consistent the one with the other. It is from such cases that we can form an opinion of the general character of the narratives. It is not at all necessary for our purpose to prove that mistakes are common in the Bible. One undoubted mistake would deprive it of the character of inerrancy. And also it would be utterly false to say that the Bible is full of errors and mistakes. The Biblical narratives are, considered as a whole, honest and trustworthy. We can see that they are truthlike even when we cannot prove them to be truthful. The Old Testament historians are keenly conscious of the natural faults, and in particular of the faults of great Israelites. They mourn over Israel, they glorify God. It may be too much to say that they are free from national bias; it would be utterly false to say that their patriotism caused them to distort the truth. The Old Testament writers, we believe, give a faithful and true account of the history of their nation, but it will be readily acknowledged that honesty and reliability are not equivalent to perfection and infallibility.

The Old Testament may fairly be called a history of the chosen people of God. Could we say that it was perfect as such? It is, of course, very brief, and brevity is something of a defect. But do the writers use their space to the best purpose? We can hardly deny that events unimportant from an historical point of view are treated at times with great fulness, whilst great national crises are very slightly noticed. How little we know of the hundreds of years of the Israelitish sojourn in Egypt! Who could write any account of those seventy years of the Babylonian captivity which wrought such a great change in the spirit of the chosen people? How meagre is the account of that greatest of centuries in Israel's history, the eighth century B.C., and of those great kings, Jeroboam II. of Israel, and Uzziah of Judah! What account is given to us of the rise of the canonical prophets? We must admit that there is an absence of political sagacity in the historians. The changes in the balance of power, the rise of world-empires as Assyria and Babylon—events from a political point of view of vital importance in Israel's history—are never noticed. Old Testament historians discern God at work so clearly that they hardly notice His workmen, and, from the gaps of the history we may reasonably assume that very often their materials were deficient.

There is, again, a defect in Old Testament histories very natural to the rudeness and simplicity of the times. They are written on the principle of making some person or some institution the centre of the narrative. They mention the facts which circle round this man or thing and leave the others

out. Consequently they are both narrow in plan and defective in information. They do not, like modern histories, take a broad and complete survey of the whole nation ; they regard it from a single point of view. Thus the narratives have a partial character. To take examples : In some books we have nothing about the priests or the law (Judges, Samuel, and even Kings) ; in others (Chronicles) these have undue importance. The history of Judges is a constant succession of falls into idolatry. In Samuel, after Samuel's reformation, idolatry is hardly mentioned. In consequence, we are left in complete ignorance of important elements in Israel's history. To argue that the author knows nothing, because he says nothing of some particular thing, is, in regard to the Old Testament, utterly fallacious. The Old Testament authors do not take wide general views, they do not write chapters describing the different elements of natural life. Their narratives serve doubtless the spiritual purposes for which they are designed. But, considered as historical records, they are full of defects.

But there are also errors of statement to be found in Holy Scripture. Take the great instance of the numbers given in Scripture.

We cannot read the Scriptures carefully without discovering that the Semitic mind is not numerical or chronological—that it is deficient in its computations of numbers and in its sense of the order of time. It is quite natural that it should be so ; though we can think in hundreds of millions, savages can only think in tens. This deficiency is to be discerned in both the Old and New Testament. In the latter,

indeed, because all the facts refer to a single generation, the limits of error are small and of little importance. But who, even with the aid of contemporary history, can give a system of chronology to the Acts? What is the date of our Lord's birth or of His crucifixion? The Gospels are so deficient in notes of time that we do not know how long our Lord's ministry lasted. But for St. John we might have supposed that it lasted only one year. Moreover, the order of the events in the Divine life is very uncertain. The sequence of events in the Gospels is moral, we are told; that is to say it is regardless of time. The chronology of the New Testament is, we must acknowledge, very imperfect, so imperfect that it tends to cause mistakes though itself may contain none.

The case is much worse in the Old Testament. We have probably still Bibles in our possession which place B.C. 4004 opposite the first verse of Genesis. This date is an inference of Archbishop Usher, and the Bible is not altogether responsible for it. But if the week of Creation is a week of seven days, as the letter of the Bible seems to assert, that date is a reasonable though not a certain deduction from the Biblical statements. If, however, we take the days of Creation as unknown periods of time, this leaves us with the view that the life of man upon this earth had lasted only some four thousand years when Christ was born. The different computations made by other chronologists, and the different numbers found in the Versions, increase this number somewhat. But if it is asserted that man's life had lasted even six or seven thousand years, it is hardly to

much to say that this is an erroneous statement. There is a consensus of testimony that man had existed on the earth for a much longer period. Egyptian remains, says Mr. Curtis, in Hastings' "Dictionary," point to a civilization whose beginnings were not later than 5000 B.C. (the word "civilization" should be noted in this statement), and very likely millenniums earlier.

Passing on, the chronological notices in the earlier books of the Bible are meagre. The books are written on chronological lines. But there is a notice in Kings,* which enabled Archbishop Usher to give 1491 for the date of the Exodus. Modern discoveries throw great doubt on this date. We certainly do not know accurately the date of the year of Solomon from which the four hundred and eighty years are reckoned. Probably it was later than Usher, following the Bible, makes it. This is not an important source of error. But were there four hundred and eighty years between Solomon and the Exodus? We observe that four hundred and eighty years is a round number (twelve times forty), and forty years is a common phrase in the Bible, meaning, probably, not a definite number of years, but simply a long time, a generation perhaps. So four hundred and eighty years, though it seems to be a particular number, is probably only a general one. Also, if we may follow the guidance of Egyptian history, 1300 B.C. is more nearly the date for the Exodus than 1491 B.C. The Egyptian history of the Pharaohs of the nineteenth dynasty illustrates the Biblical narrative, and tends to show its historical

* 1 Kings vi. 1.

truth. That dynasty reigned in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C.

The first book in the Bible written on chronological lines is the Book of Kings. We are able to compare the different chronological notices contained in it, and see whether they are self-consistent. We can also compare the chronology of the chosen people with those of foreign nations, and in particular, Assyria, and see whether it agrees with them. The result of these comparisons shows that the chronology of Kings is full of errors.

It is composed on a bad system—a system which makes minute accuracy impossible. It does not date events from an epoch, nor does its history take the form of annals. It reckons by years, and disregards months. We do not know whether it reckons the reigns of the kings from the accession, or from the first day of the following calendar year.

There are two systems in Kings, based on the years of the reigns of the kings of Northern and Southern Israel respectively. These two systems are inconsistent with themselves, and with each other. Any commentary will show the truth of this.

The Biblical dates, when compared with those derived from foreign sources, in particular the Assyrian Canon, do not generally agree. Biblical chronology is always earlier than Assyrian till the date of the fall of the Northern kingdom. The Assyrian is to be preferred to the Biblical, because it is drawn up on a better system. The events of each year are placed under the year, each year having a name of its own. The year of a total eclipse settles the dates of the rest, and we can trace the

chronology continuously to established dates. Most certainly the superiority of the Bible to other ancient records is not to be found in its chronology. Other numbers in the Old Testament are similarly faulty. The numbers of the children of Israel cause great difficulty from the Exodus to the Babylonian captivity. They imply that Israel was a nation numbering from three millions in the desert to ten millions in the time of the kingdom. Now Palestine west of the Jordan is about the size of Wales, and Eastern Palestine is two-thirds that size; but very seldom were the chosen people in full possession of their land. It may be doubted whether the land near the coast of the Mediterranean was ever theirs. There was, besides, a great deal of barren land, and still more of land unfit for corn-growing. It is difficult to see how the land of Israel could support so many people, and yet it was a food and, in particular, corn-exporting country, as we see from the trade with Tyre in Solomon's time. If we consider the territory of Judah only, the case is still more difficult. The kingdom of Judah was about the size of Norfolk, but Philistia, a part of it, was never effectively occupied, and one-third of the whole was wilderness. How could such a kingdom have an army of over a million, as in Jehoshaphat's time, or even of half a million, as stated in the account of David's census? The numbers of captives taken to Babylon, and of exiles returning from it, are much more reasonable. Tens of thousands take the place of hundreds of thousands. It is worth noticing that the same excessive numbers are to be found in the history of Josephus. Travellers say that Jerusalem could

not have found standing ground for the numbers he says attended the feasts, or were hemmed in by Titus during the siege. It is plain also that many other numbers in the Bible cannot be defended, and, in particular, the numbers of Chronicles.

There is no battle in the history of the world comparable in numbers to the first battle between the rival kingdoms of North and South.* Four hundred thousand Judahites meet eight hundred thousand Israelites, and kill five hundred thousand of them. The defeated nation, so far from being crushed by this blow, is within twenty years so much stronger than the victorious nation that the latter has to call in foreign aid against it.

Again, the gold and silver laid up by David for the building of the temple is inconceivably great. The chronicler makes David say, "Now, behold in my affliction I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver."† There are good reasons for identifying the Hebrew talent with the Babylonian. The Babylonian talent of gold being worth £6000, and the talent of silver over £400, David's treasure would amount to six hundred millions in gold, and four hundred millions in silver. A tenth part of this money seems more than David could possibly have accumulated.

Numbers are no doubt specially liable to corruption in transmission, but corruptions of the text could not account for the numerical difficulties of the Bible. Biblical numbers are systematically extravagant.

And errors in the Bible are not confined to

* 2 Chron. xiii.

† 1 Chron. xxii. 14.

numbers. It is probably impossible to harmonize all the discrepancies in the Evangelists. These discrepancies are not discoveries of modern criticisms ; they were discerned by Origen seventeen hundred years ago, and he was convinced they could not be literally or historically explained.* They are slight and unimportant ; they are natural ; they tend, rightly considered, to our confirmation in the truth of the gospel, for they show that the Evangelists were independent witnesses, but it can hardly be denied that they exist. What words were written on the cross ? The Evangelists give us four forms. What was the question our Lord asked the ruler ? Was it as St. Matthew says, " Why askest thou Me concerning that which is good ? " or as St. Mark, " Why callest thou Me good ? " What was the exact day and hour of the Crucifixion ? Can we reconcile the different accounts of the Resurrection ? The Evangelists differ as independent witnesses are wont to differ. If they had not differed we could not have maintained their independence. Again, St. Matthew quotes the passage of Zechariah about the thirty pieces of silver as spoken by Jeremiah the prophet. Can we accept St. Augustine's explanation that St. Matthew was inspired to write Jeremiah instead of Zechariah, to show the agreement of the prophets ? St. Mark makes a similar error when in the first words of his Gospel he quotes a passage partly from Isaiah and partly from Malachi, as if it were Isaiah's alone. A later scribe saw his error, and corrected it. Similar instances of error could be multiplied from the Old Testament, but it is needless to quote them.

* "Comment. on John," book x. 2, 3, 4.

Unimportant as they are, their inconsistency with the theory that the Divine Inspiration exempts Holy Scripture from all, even the slightest, errors, leads us on to consider how we should use and interpret Holy Scripture. It is a matter of faith to us to acknowledge that Holy Scripture is a guide to our feet and a light to our paths. If we followed its spiritual teaching we should not err from God's ways. But what is its teaching? Is it to be found in every text? Every heresy has been able to appeal to some Scriptural text. Must every precept in Scripture be obeyed? Some have thought so, and have committed those terrible crimes which disgrace the Christian name. Take for example, that precept, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." In obedience to it how much innocent blood has been shed? And we may fairly say that that blood was shed not because of the mal-administration of a good law, but in the administration of a law which was not good. Wesley said, to give up a belief in witchcraft was to give up the Bible. Are we prepared to accept the dilemma? It is the spirit, not the letter, of Scripture which is our spiritual guide and light. If it is to direct us in the right way we must not only read and mark, but inwardly digest it. Holy Scripture does not contain a code of laws which give definite instructions for all possible emergencies, like the traditions of the scribes, but it contains principles which, under the guidance of the Spirit, we apply to our own particular circumstances. It is a gross superstition to open the pages of Scripture, as Wesley and others did, and take our guidance from the first words we see. Bishop Westcott, in his "Revelation

of the Father," says: "No doubt we have often used the Scriptures for purposes for which they were not designed. We have treated them too often as the one mechanical utterance of the Spirit, and not as writings through which the Spirit Himself still speaks."

The Book of Job illustrates admirably the truth of Bishop Westcott's words. That book is, all would acknowledge, not only of great poetic beauty, but also of great spiritual value. Nevertheless, how dangerous it would be for any one to give what is called a Scriptural proof from the Book of Job. The three friends whose speeches it records did not, we know, speak the thing which was right as Job did. Their speeches plainly do not contain infallible truth. Job, though right comparatively with the three friends, spake unadvisedly with his lips, and inquired the justice and love of God. All that he said was not true. Would it be reasonable to affirm that Elihu's words differed essentially from those of others? Job is, we may suppose, a dramatic poem, and its author represents the Lord as giving the solution of the problem of suffering which the book proposes. When we read the words put into the Lord's mouth, we know that they do not express the full truth on the matter. The Lord had many things to say on "suffering" which men could not bear at that time. The problem of suffering is not wholly solved to us, but the fundamental principles which govern its solution had not been fully revealed to any of mankind when Job lived. How could the problem of suffering be solved before the Life, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ?

It is a well-known fact that we learn most from our mistakes; so we learn most important lessons from Job's mistakes. The Inspiration of the book we discern in its general instructiveness. It does not consist in the infallible truth of each sentence or argument. Job is, to use again Bishop Westcott's phrase, no "mechanical utterance of the Spirit." Its several statements and arguments are not free from error, but it is a writing through which the Spirit Himself still speaks to us. It describes with Divine power the sufferings of a human soul which, after many an impatient struggle and unbelieving complaint, found its rest in the bosom of God.

We have already seen that we must regard the Psalms in a similar way. Not every statement in the Psalms is an infallible truth, nor is every wish a godly wish. The Psalmists in their utterances are set for our warning as well as for our example. God teaches us through them sometimes what we ought not to say or feel. The Book of Ecclesiastes must be regarded in a similar way.

And the principles which apply so clearly to the books mentioned apply also to the rest of the Old Testament books, and in some degree, to the New Testament books as well. The Old Testament books generally give us examples of spiritual life from men who lived and died in faith. They are recorded for our instruction, and for our warning also, but not for our indiscriminate imitation. We must not, like the Puritans, claim the Israelites as our authority for exterminating our enemies, even though we regard them with truth as the enemies of the Lord. We must not hew captured foes in pieces, like Samuel.

What Old Testament saints or New Testament apostles did was not always ideally right ; what they said was not always perfectly true. Their lives were not perfect models, nor were their words positive laws to us. We Christians know only one perfect example, and one infallible teacher—even Christ. And yet the lives and words of the saints of both covenants are so set forth to us, under the direction of the Spirit, that they are teachers sent from God, telling us what to believe and what to do. If however, we regard them as infallible teachers of truth, or perfect models of action, we shall be liable to hear our Master's voice saying to us, "Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of."

XVIII

DEGREES IN INSPIRATION

ARE there such things as degrees in Inspiration ? In other words, have some of the books or passages in the Bible more of the Divine in them than others ? It is plain that there cannot be such things as degrees in infallibility. Infallibility is an absolute thing. It would appear, however, for various reasons, that some parts of Scripture have more of God and less of man, more of perfection and less of imperfection than others.

The sacred writers themselves occasionally recognize different degrees of authority in their own teachings. We know that St. Paul says that some of his words are spoken by the Lord, some by himself and not by the Lord. He speaks some things by permission and not by commandment. He gives his judgment, not as an inspired Apostle, but as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

Sometimes the prophets speak of the Word of the Lord as coming to them with an overpowering force. For example, Jeremiah * describes God's Word in his heart as like a burning fire shut up in his bones. This can hardly have been an habitual feeling.

* Jer. xx. 9.

Again, the inspiration of Moses is said to have been greater than that of the other prophets. Some of the sacred writers, on the other hand, do not seem to be conscious of any special Divine power working within them. They make no claim to be inspired, or to be acting on any express command of God. They were simply acting under His general guidance. There is a great difference between the "It seemed good to me" of St. Luke, in the preface of his Gospel, and the peremptory commission of the prophets unwillingly obeyed.

In accordance with these facts, we find that not every sentence in the Bible contains a Divine revelation ; and more, not every book in the Bible makes any addition to the Divine Revelation. There are some books of the Bible which we could not spare ; there are some, also, which we should hardly miss if they were lost.

It is plain, further, that degrees in Inspiration were recognized in the Church, both of the Old and New Covenant. The Jewish Church, rightly or wrongly, regarded the Law as the fundamental revelation of God. The Prophets added nothing to the Law, for there was nothing to add. The Law was the Divine text, the Prophets the comment upon it.

Some of the Fathers, also, recognized differences between the canonical books, and placed them in different classes. Some of them, again, gave pre-eminence to the words of Christ. Origen, on the contrary, thought that the words of the Evangelists had less authority than those which were introduced by "Thus saith the Lord."

Philo said there were three different degrees of

Inspiration. The first degree was when God spake and the prophet was His interpreter, or mouthpiece ; the second, when God and the prophet spake alternately ; the third, when the prophet spake entirely possessed by the Divine Spirit. Philo believed that the less of the human mind there was in any Divine word, the higher was its inspiration.

Now, these various discriminations in regard to inspired words may or may not be true and accurate; at least they prove that the idea of degrees in Inspiration was familiar to early teachers, Jewish or Christian.

The teaching of the Bible in regard to spiritual gifts leads us to the same conclusion. We know that there is one Spirit, but that there are many different *χαρίσματα*. These *χαρίσματα* are not all of the same value, they cannot all be called "the best gifts." We find also various phrases, such as "filled with the Spirit," "giveth the Spirit by measure," and others, which suggest greater or less outpourings of the Spirit ; and we know also that the Spirit divides His gifts, " severally as He will." It seems reasonable to infer that not all kinds of Inspiration are equal. The Apostle and Prophet were both inspired teachers but the inspiration of the Apostle was higher than that of the Prophet. This does not prove that the writers of the different sacred books had different degrees of inspiration, but it inclines us to believe it.

And the analogy of God's dealings leads us to expect it. In God's universe we never find a dead level of equality. The statement, "All men are equal," is belied by experience. As a matter of fact, all men differ in gifts, and also in their appropriation of them.

Things of pre-eminent excellence imply the existence of things not quite so good. Men do not rise by leaps, but rather by steps. There is a gradual ascent to the highest points. The works of genius differ from those of the ordinary kind as cream from milk. Without the milk there could not be the cream. Man is a member of a body. Abnormal power in a single faculty cannot be utilized. In harmony with all this, we find in the Bible not only prophets, but a prophetic class. The prophets of supreme prophetical power are heads of schools.

The Apostles themselves, though on all of them the Spirit came with power, were obviously unequal in spiritual things, they were unequal even in their grasp of the great principles of the gospel of Christ. Also, it may be added, the Apostles were not always equal to themselves. There is the famous example of St. Peter's dissimulation at Antioch, which drew down St. Paul's stern rebuke. And as for St. Paul himself, those words of his, "I would that they which unsettle you would even cut themselves off," do not breathe the Spirit of Christ in its purest and highest form. They are very different from other words in his Epistle to the Romans, spoken, we may notice, of almost the same class of persons, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake." He was willing himself to be anathema for the Jews, whilst he wishes the Judaizers to anathematize themselves. Can these two words of his be equally inspired by the Spirit of God? We do not naturally expect equality in the distribution of God's gifts. We may confidently say that, as a matter of fact, we do not find it in the

different parts of Holy Scripture. The books of the Bible are not equally full of Divine teaching. The Church's use of Holy Scripture proves this. Christian people recognize in a practical way that some parts of Holy Scripture contain a higher measure of inspiration than others. Christian experience marks out a Bible within a Bible. Now, it is the general consensus which gives this fact its importance. The opinion of individuals in such a matter has little value. Individuals are not wont to hold with equal grasp all the articles of the Christian Faith. Having their favourite doctrines, they naturally have favourite sacred books or chapters. Heretics, also, who avowedly hold only certain parts of the Catholic Faith and reject others, naturally lay undue stress on books of the Bible in which their favourite doctrines are taught, and ignore formally or critically books in which these doctrines are not prominent, or which oppose their false teachings. Luther's depreciation of the Epistle of St. James and other sacred books may be taken as an instance of this. A single phase of St. Paul's teaching was to him the article of a standing or falling Church. There is a fundamental connection, as Bishop Westcott has pointed out, between the Catholic Church and a Catholic canon of Holy Scripture.* So it is only when Christian people generally agree as to the comparative values of the books of Holy Scripture, that a decision of value is given on that point. And there can be no doubt that such a decision has been given. It is tacit and informal, but it is none the less real. As we have already pointed out, the canon of Holy Scripture

* "The Bible in the Church," p. 296.

itself was settled by some such tacit and informal consensus of the different Churches. That decision remains in full force, but it is also generally agreed that some books of the canon are primary, whilst others are only secondary authorities. It would be idle to maintain that all books, even in the New Testament, are regarded as having the same authority. St. John's Gospel has a certain pre-eminence amongst the Gospels. The simple and the wise would generally agree on this. *Primus inter pares* would be the verdict, nothing more. St. Paul and St. John are regarded as the greatest inspired Doctors of the Church. It is an interesting fact that Dr. Vaughan made this dying profession: "In the prospect of death, a little nearer or a little further off, I wish to state explicitly that I have put my trust in the revelation of the Gospel as made in the Gospel of St. John and in the Epistles of St. John and St. Paul." And what is true to a certain degree when we compare the New Testament books with one another, is true to a much higher extent when we compare the New Testament with the Old.

The Spirit came down in His fulness, and abode with the Apostles. Those who were greatest in the kingdom of heaven, being much greater than John the Baptist, must needs have been exalted far above the greatest of the Prophets. Practically, as we know, Christian people explain, and to some extent explain away, the teachings of the Old Testament by those of the New. And for this they have the authority of their Master in the sermon on the Mount. The Old Testament books themselves cannot be regarded of equal authority. The laws of

certain books are, as we know, superseded by higher laws. The Prophets are the greatest of Old Testament teachers, but they were diversely and unequally gifted. Isaiah takes the first place, or that later unknown prophet whose prophecies are appended to Isaiah's book. The New Testament gives us our standard of excellence. It provides us with a criterion by which we judge the books of the Old Testament canon. We reckon those teachers to be greatest who most clearly discerned the Coming One and the coming age—Christ and His Church.

On the other hand, in some Old Testament books the Divine Inspiration can be very dimly discerned. The Book of Esther,—is it history? It is very strange history. The Jews, though an exiled race, are allowed to make civil war in the kingdom of Persia, and to slay seventy-five thousand of their enemies in one day. True, Ahasuerus is the Xerxes of history, and we know that Xerxes was wont to play mad tricks. The Book Esther teaches us trust in Divine providence; but it is trust in a God which it does not dare to name. It teaches patriotism likewise; but patriotism which is not of the purest and noblest kind. Its place in Christian hearts corresponds to its place in the history of the Old Testament canon, and its use amongst the Jews on the Feast of Purim. It lies on the very borders of the sacred enclosure. It is not to Esther we turn for help and instruction in our time of need. The same remarks, *mutatis mutandis*, may be applied to Ecclesiastes. It is pessimistic in tone; it is pseudonymous, we must needs think. The witness of Ecclesiastes to Jesus is very slight. Yet it is "the testimony of

Jesus" which is "the spirit of prophecy." There is again the Song of Songs of which Professor Sanday says, "It is just an idyll of faithful human love, and nothing more. It is never quoted in the New Testament, and contributes nothing to the sum of Revelation. Its place in our Bibles is due to a method of interpretation, which is now generally abandoned." We may add to these the Book of Chronicles, which must be regarded as giving a one-sided representation of Jewish history. It has its value as supplementing the Book of Kings; but, taken by itself, it ascribes an exaggerated and unhistorical importance to the priest and priestly institutions. We shall have to shut our eyes to facts if we assert that books like these are as full of life and light Divine as the Prophets, much less the Gospels. A decision which has some claims to the title "Catholic" has been given on this point. By general consent we commonly pass these books over in our study of God's Word. There is something very wooden and mechanical in that piety which takes delight in reading the Bible straight through. On the other hand, certain passages are to us as a cup of living water, always full and inexhaustible. We may recoil from the statement, but our action establishes it. Some of the sacred writers less fully manifest God and His will, and so are less fully inspired, than others.

Inequality in Revelation is a necessary consequence of the fact that it was given, during the course of hundreds of years, to generations of the human race unequal in spiritual capacity. The words, "Hitherto ye have been unable to bear it," might have been said to each generation in turn. Each

generation in turn also saw some part of the veil uplifted, and somewhat of its incapacity to receive Divine truth removed. Every age showed advance and development in the knowledge of God, so every age was in some sense "a fulness of time." Of every previous age men could say, "When I was a child I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child ;" saying of their own, "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." Inequality in Revelation is also a consequence of the fact that God spake to mankind in many parts and in many ways. The Bible is a book, and yet not one book. It is a collection of books ; it is a library. It is a library, and yet not a collection of books placed side by side on one shelf. Its different volumes are bound together by a unity of life and teaching. It is a body rather than a library. Being a body, its members are not all equal. Some are fuller of life, some have a greater beauty, some a wider usefulness. Some we could lose without overpowering loss ; some, on the other hand, are essential to the life of the whole. The Old Testament dies if cut off from the New. The Epistles lose all power if the Gospels are taken away. To some books, as to certain bodily members, we could hardly assign any useful purpose in the present, though they may have been necessary in the past, or may have a purpose in the future. Some books or parts of books serve the purposes of bones and sinews in the body—they hold all together. Bones have their uses ; there could be no growth in a body without them ; but when a man's hunger has to be appeased, he removes the bones. Baxter the Puritan says, "The Scriptures are like a man's body,

where some parts are for the preservation of the rest, and may be maimed without death. The sense is the soul of Scripture, the letter but the body or vehicle." The document known as P has that purpose in Genesis. It is the skeleton (with some scraps of flesh) which unites the stories of J and E into one whole. Regarding Holy Scripture thus, we can fully appreciate its inspiration, whilst at the same time we do not put to wrongful use, or lay too much stress on, its several parts. Every book and statement may have its Divine purpose, but that purpose must be sought with discernment, and all are not equally valuable, all are not equal sharers in the life of the whole.

There is proof, as Professor Sanday observes, of a "central mind" at work in the composition of the Bible. "The diversified products of individual Inspiration combine together and become articulate members in a connected and coherent scheme." * The Four Gospels furnish us with an excellent illustration of this statement. "They supplement one another's deficiencies. Each adds something to the completeness of our knowledge of our Lord's human life." The Divine Spirit we believe to be "the Central Mind." It was He who inspired the different parts and methods of the Divine Revelation, and then combined them all together so that they formed one living Body—the written record of the Divine Revelation. Nevertheless, we must never forget that there are many members in that one Body, and that all its members have not the same office or the same honour.

* "Inspiration," p. 402.

And if we admit degrees of Inspiration within the canon of Holy Scripture, we shall be prepared to acknowledge that books outside it were in some degree inspired. Those words of Justin Martyr,* that everything which men have taught reasonably they have taught by the aid of the Divine Reason, *i.e.* the Word of God, contain a deep truth.

The Church of England ascribes authority to the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament. She reads them in her public services, yet discriminately and sparingly; but she does not use them to establish any doctrine. It is well worthy of notice that she treats some of the canonical books in a very similar way. Authority of a secondary kind, whether in theory or practice, suggests a lower kind of inspiration. Hence we are led to infer that the books of Holy Scripture cannot be placed on one level of equality, and sharply separated from all other books. In other words, that Inspiration is not confined to Holy Scripture, and admits of degrees.

* "Apol." i. 46.

XIX

HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

THERE is no orthodox doctrine of Inspiration. The Church, whilst firmly believing that her sacred Book is given to her by the Inspiration of God, has never defined what Inspiration is. Christian people, therefore, holding fast to Church teaching are free in the matter. It has been the object of this book to use that freedom with faith and reverence, by inquiring what the phenomena of Scripture itself tell us concerning that Divine character which distinguishes it from all other books. It has not been a matter of primary importance to inquire what Church teachers have said on the matter. Nevertheless this book would not be complete if it did not attempt to sketch the history of the doctrine of the Inspiration of the Bible, and this we propose now to do.

The idea of Inspiration is very early to be found in the history of the chosen people. From the days of Abraham onwards, God is described as divinely leading or influencing men for the accomplishment of His great purpose, the Revelation of Himself to man, so that they might be able to receive the knowledge of Himself and of His will, and to do His work. The cognate idea of an inspired record of Revelation

does not seem to be so early. The germ of an inspired book is, indeed, found in the Ten Words, and in various commands to and notices concerning Moses.* But this seems certain, that no sacred book was in general use amongst the chosen people before the Babylonian captivity. We know that the book of the Law was found in Josiah's reign, but it would be difficult to say when it was lost. It is not, indeed, till the Captivity that Israel became, what she never afterwards ceased to be, the people of a book. The first volume of that book was the Law, and the Law never ceased to have supreme authority amongst the Jews ; but two volumes of Prophets and Writings were added, and these also were regarded as Divine. We cannot trace the steps of the process by which the Old Testament was recognized to be Divine by the Jews. But we know that Jesus, son of Sirach, esteeming his own book highly, placed it on a lower level than the Law, the Prophets, and the other Writings. In the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes the religious importance of the sacred books was so well known, that they were sought for specially by the king's officers, and their surrender by a Jew was regarded as an act of apostacy. The canon was practically settled more than a hundred years before our Lord came, and in His day the Jews were established in the belief that their Scriptures were Divine. Our Lord Himself and His apostles confirm this belief. Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that the whole Old Testament is justly believed to be Divine. He distinguishes it from later Jewish writings, and describes

* Exod. xvii. 14, xxiv. 4, xxxiv. 27 ; Numb. xxxiii. 2 ; Deut. xxxi. 9.

the unique reverence his people felt for it. There were no books for which the Greeks would undergo the least harm ; for their Bible the Jews would willingly suffer and die. Passing on to the history of the Christian Church, at first the Old Testament is her only Bible, but soon, *i.e.* before A.D. 200, the Gospels and apostolical writings are regarded as of equal authority with the Law and the prophets. Fathers of the apostolical age, as Clement and Ignatius, acknowledge the inferiority of their own writings. In Justin's days the memoirs of the Apostles are read together in the assemblies for Christian worship.* Some years before the end of the second century, Irenæus declares that for the Church the Old Testament and the New are equally the rule of truth. Later testimonies to the Inspiration of both volumes of the Church's Bible it is unnecessary to give. The Church, with one consent, canonizes the books contained in them, *i.e.* pronounces them to be Divine. But it is not the fact, but the character of the Inspiration of the Bible which is the subject of our inquiry, and the first writer who gives us important information concerning this is the Jew Philo.

Philo the Alexandrian Jew, who was born about twenty years before our Lord, is, indeed, of supreme importance in the history of the Inspiration of the Bible. One school of teachers in the Churches derives from him its idea of the relation of Inspiration to the inspired man ; all schools of interpreters, with very few exceptions up to the time of the Reformation, derive from him that quality of hidden or allegorical meaning which he thought Inspiration gave to the

* Justin, "Apology," i. 66.

inspired text. In both respects, we think, Philo's teaching—which involved, to some extent, a departure from the teaching of the Old Testament, and an acceptance of philosophical theories concerning the nature of God and of matter—was mischievous and misleading.

The power of combining the various teachings of the different and even contrary schools of teachers is Philo's great characteristic. He combines ideas derived from different schools of Greek philosophy, and also, which is much more wonderful, he combines Greek philosophy with the Jewish belief. The Old Testament generally, and the Law of Moses pre-eminently, supplies him with his text-book. Greek philosophy explains to him the secrets of its authority and its meaning. His idea of Inspiration comes from the Platonic philosophy. That philosophy had a noble and exalted idea of the Divine Being: He dwelt in the highest heavens. But it had also a very low idea of material existence, and, in consequence, the Most High could not humble Himself to behold the things which are in heaven and earth. In consequence, its teachings concerning the relations between God and the world differed essentially from those of the Old Testament. Material Creation was not the work of the Supreme Being; it would have soiled his hands to come in contact with it. Plato's God is not a present Deity, ordering all things in heaven and earth. In consequence, God and man could not even come together, much less could they work hand in hand. In accordance with this teaching, it was necessary for Philo to minimize man's share in the Divine book. When the Divine Spirit entered

a man, his reason departed from him, not to return again till the Divine Spirit departed. As long as the prophet was under inspiration, he was in ignorance. He was not God's intelligent spokesman ; though he seemed to speak, Another used his mouth and tongue. He was forced, one may say, to these conclusions by his philosophical ideas, and, in consequence, forced to explain away, spiritualize away, those truths concerning the Divine immanence with which the Old Testament is filled. Now, since Philo thus believed that the more of God there was in anything the less there was of man, he necessarily taught that books of the highest inspiration were dictated by God, and were verbally inspired. This involved him in two difficulties. (1) Not being a good Hebrew scholar, his Bible was the Greek Septuagint Version. He was therefore compelled to maintain that not only the Old Testament prophets, but also the Greek translators were inspired by God. Some invisible person, he says, was at the ear of the LXX., so that they used the same words and expressions. They were prophets in whom spake the Divine Word. Philo was the first, so far as we know, to maintain the inspiration of the LXX., but it was believed afterwards by a great number of Christians. The Jews, on the other hand, came to regard it with suspicion because of its Christian use. The LXX. was, indeed, of incalculable value for the spread of the gospel. It was the Gentiles' gateway to Christ. But whilst we thankfully acknowledge the Divine providence in the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek before the coming of the Christ, the idea of its inspiration is an irrational figment. Its errors and

mistakes are manifold. It was a great misfortune to exegesis that Christian teachers should regard a corrupt version as if it were the original text.

Philo believed that the Greek Bible was verbally inspired, but he also believed that it contained self-contradictory statements, and also many ridiculous stories. His philosophic training had given him considerable contempt for the letter, or literal meaning, or narrative—in one word, the body of Scripture. The words of the Scriptures were, he says, but shadows of bodies, and the meanings which are apparent to investigation, beneath them, are the real things to be pondered upon.* The migration of Abraham from his country, kindred, and home, teaches the alienation of the mind from the body, the outward senses, and uttered speech.† At times, indeed, the letter of Scripture teaches mere follies. God did not really plant fruit trees in Paradise, nor was the world created in six days. So, then, Philo had to attempt to reconcile his theory of verbal inspiration with the blemishes and absurdities which he observed in the letter and outward form of Holy Scripture. He did this by his system of allegorical interpretation.

Scripture contained two elements—Body and Soul. The Body was the letter, and it was often bad, and always of little value. The Soul was the allegorical meaning, and it was Divine. Some passages had no literal meaning; others, both literal and allegorical. The one was for the common herd, the other for the wise. To read Scripture with real profit, the

* "On the Confusion of Tongues," c. 37.

† "On the Migration of Abraham," c. 2.

narratives and histories, and even the laws, must be made into philosophical or moral teaching.

Under these rules of exegesis, the trees planted in Paradise became terrestrial virtues ; every proper name, even in its Greek form, had a mystic meaning ; the most ordinary historical detail, or most material law, became a vehicle of spiritual instruction. The difference between allegorical interpretation and the derivation of spiritual lessons from a narrative should be noted. The one has no connection in thought with the literal meaning ; the other is based upon or proceeds from it. For example, Philo regards Simeon, one of the least worthy of Jacob's sons, as a type of spiritual effort. Joseph, the noblest, is in one passage the type of the sensual mind, and, in another, of one wise in his own conceit.

Philo was not the inventor of allegorical interpretation. It was a method which heathen philosophy (the Stoics in particular) had found useful for the purpose of giving decent and worthy meanings to the disgraceful stories told about the gods in Homer, and in heathen mythology generally. He and other Jews with him were induced by the ridicule which the Greeks poured on some of the Old Testament stories to use it in a similar way. To those imbued with Greek thought on the transcendental nature of God, and on the inherent evil in matter, those stories naturally seemed ridiculous. The Divine character of the Hebrew books had to be maintained, and the philosophical objections had to be answered. Stoic philosophy provided Jews of the Hellenistic type, and in particular Philo, with a weapon ready to their hand.

The influence of Philo on the history of the Inspiration and Interpretation of the Bible was immense. The early Fathers, who were mostly ignorant of Hebrew, adopted his view of the inspiration of the LXX, and interpreted it and also the New Testament in the same way. Photinus remarks that all allegorical teaching in the Church had its source in Philo. Origen, in particular, used Philo's methods and he was for many centuries the greatest and most used commentator on the Bible. Allegorical interpretations were reckoned to be the orthodox interpretations—the interpretations which gave Holy Scripture its highest and noblest meanings. By using them Church teachers were able to acknowledge the existence of imperfections and mistakes in the Bible whilst maintaining its dictation by the Holy Spirit. They thus served to reconcile the supposed demands of faith with the demands of reason. Again, the Fathers following him interpreted the doctrines of Revelation by Greek Philosophy. The doctrine of God in the earlier Fathers and especially in the Alexandrian school was far too like Philo's or Plato's. It was a doctrine of philosophical speculation too little based on the Divine history of the chosen people. The Fathers also had too great a contempt for the human body ; they found it hard to get rid of the idea that the material was essentially evil. These facts were great hindrances in the way of formulating a doctrine of the Person of Christ, and also of Inspiration, because they made it difficult to conceive the possibility of the dwelling of God in man, or the co-operation of God with him.

But not all of Philo's teaching was accepted. The

doctrine of ecstasy as the prophetic condition during inspiration, though reproduced by the Montanists and some Fathers, is rejected by the Church. Nor again did the Church despise Old Testament history as he did, and they valued the Prophets more than the Law.

Philo's essential error is summed up in his total rejection of any possibility of the communion of the mortal with the Immortal.

Greek philosophy taught him this ; the Old Testament taught him the exact contrary. We as Christians know that the dwelling of the Immortal with the mortal—of God with man, is not only not *nefas*, not something contrary to the eternal verities, or morally impossible, but a historical fact. For the eternal Logos, a Logos transcending in Divine attributes the Logos of whom Philo taught, actually became flesh, and dwelt amongst us mortal men, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Josephus is much more definite in his statements about the contents of the Canon than Philo, but he says nothing of importance on the special nature of Inspiration, and we may pass on at once to the writings of the Fathers.

The Fathers are clear that all the Scriptures of both Testaments are Divine, but there seem to be two different opinions as to the human element in Holy Scripture.

(i) We find many statements that the Scriptures were not spoken by their human authors but by the Holy Spirit Himself, or that they were dictated by Him.* Nothing came from the prophet's

* Justin, "Apol.," i. 36; Origen, "Jer. Hom.," ii.

own conception.* Such statements may simply be emphatic declarations of the Divine character of Holy Scripture, and need not always have any exclusive meaning. But it is plain that some Fathers regarded the human part in Holy Scripture as passive and mechanical. A very common simile of the relation of the sacred writers to the Spirit is that of musical instrument to musician. The Holy Spirit is the musician who plays, or the plectrum which strikes the note on the human prophet. In the "Cohortatio,"† ascribed to Justin, we find the following passage, "Holy men had no need of rhetorical art. All they had to do was to keep themselves pure and so open to the workings of the Divine Spirit." The Divine Spirit (whom he compares to a plectrum) came down from heaven and used righteous men like a harp or lyre to reveal the knowledge of Divine and heavenly things. If this statement be true, man cannot be called a co-operator with the Spirit in the work of the Divine Revelation. It should be noted, however, that the human element is not annihilated by this simile, for every musical instrument has a character of its own.

Much stronger words than these are used by some Fathers for they held (like Philo) that Inspiration deprived a man of his reason.

Athenagoras said,‡ that the prophets were entranced and deprived of their natural power of reason when they came under the power of the Holy Spirit, who made use of them as a flute-player breathes into a flute.

This was the Montanistic teaching on Inspiration.

* "Cohortatio," c. 18.

† c. 8.

‡ "Leg." § 19.

The error of the Montanists was to exaggerate the difference between the natural and the supernatural, reason and faith, the Church and the world. Their chief teachers were prophets who claimed to be the possessors of a special inspiration. They received the Holy Spirit in a state of ecstasy. Their inspiration was overwhelming, and there was no self-control. Tertullian, himself a Montanist, says that *amentia*, i.e., unintelligence, want of reason, madness, is the spiritual force in which prophecy consists.* He says, also, that when a man is in the Spirit, and beholds the glory of God, or when God speaks through him, it is necessary that he should lose his sense (*excidat sensu*) inasmuch as he is overshadowed (*obumbratus*) by the Divine power. This is remarkable teaching, and seems contrary to the facts. Do we connect *amentia* with prophetic utterances? The prophets seem to be the wisest, most far-seeing, and most intelligent men of their day. Does God's Spirit mutilate a man by depriving him of his sense? Surely it rather makes him a noble and perfect man. And, again, can it be that God's Spirit overshadows the prophet when it enlightens him in regard to spiritual truths?

It must be noticed that this Montanistic teaching—that inspiration can in ecstasy deprive a man of his reason—was much disliked by the Church generally. Many Fathers say that ecstasy is the mark of the false prophet.† The Hebrew prophets are not like

* "De Anima," c. 21.

† Cf. Clement, "Stromata," i. 17; Eusebius, v. 17; Origen, "Contra Celsum," vii. 4; Ath., "Discourse against Arians," iii. 47; Chrysostom, "Homily," 28, on 1 Corinthians.

the Pythian priestess. Their natural powers are not clouded or confused or lost ; they are not possessed like demoniacs, or carried away like madmen. Their understandings are awake, and their minds are sober and orderly. They do not lose their reason, but their reason is purified from sensuality.

(2) There is also a school of teachers which brings out the prophets' share, a full and intelligent share, in their prophetic utterances. Stress is laid by them on the previous preparation of the prophet for his office, and on his moral affinity with God. There is a spirit in the prophet which responds to the teaching of the Spirit of God. And the Divine power works within them and with them, rather than from without and upon them. Hippolytus describes this previous preparation of the prophet and his harmonious working along with God with great fulness. He retains the metaphor which described the prophet as the musical instrument and God as the player, but he guards it against erroneous ideas. First, he teaches, there is a tuning of the instrument. The prophet is perfected,* all his powers are put to rights. He is made worthy of the honour, which is his, of union with God and fulfilment with wisdom. It is thus a man perfected in natural capacity, as well as a man of God, to whom the Word of God, the Divine Revelation, comes. And when it has been received the prophet meditates upon it and becomes perfectly persuaded of its truth. Last of all, he utters that which has been revealed to him ; he is God's spokesman. There is, we see, a true co-operation between God and man here, between the Spirit and the human

* *Κατηρπισμένος.* Cf. Luke vi. 40.

will and understanding. The prophets spake what God willed, Hippolytus says, but they willed it also. Clement of Alexandria * also gives the same teaching, with beautiful imagery. He remarks that it was a higher inspiration than the Greek philosophers which the Masters of Israel received, because they, speaking to man in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, led men to Christ. The Word of God, he goes on to say —He was of David's seed, and yet before David—thought little of lifeless instruments of music, as the lyre or harp. The instruments He used were the world, and in particular the little world of man's body and soul. Through them He made, by means of the Holy Spirit, His music. "Thou art My harp, My flute, and My temple," He said to man—"My harmonious flute, My spiritual flute, the temple of My Word." The harp was to sound; the lute was to be inspired; the temple was to be inhabited. So man was regarded as a living and reasonable instrument of music on which God played, and who was able to respond in many ways to the Divine touch and breath and presence. Man was an instrument with many sounds. He was a temple which contained the Lord.

Enough has been said concerning the relation between the Divine Spirit and the Inspired Prophet; let us now see what the Fathers say as to the character of the Inspired Word. There are many statements to the effect that the word is perfect and contains no mistake.† The Apostles had a perfect

* "Protreptikos," i. 5.

† Irenaeus, "Hær." iii. l. 1; iii. l. 5. Origen, "Com. Matt." xv. 8. Augustine, "Ep. to Jerome," and many others.

knowledge and were beyond all falsehood. On the other hand, some even of the same Fathers made statements which seem to say the direct contrary. Origen has the highest appreciation of Holy Scripture. The sacred writers can tell no lie or make no slip. The Bible contains mysteries of Divine knowledge and wisdom which will nourish the souls of the saints even in the future life. God's words are to be treated with as great reverence as the Blessed Sacrament. It is no less offence to disregard the Word of God than His Body. Notwithstanding all this he is most free in his criticisms of the letter of Holy Scripture. It would turn a man dizzy, he says,* to set forth all the discrepancies of the Evangelists. He who carefully examines the question will find countless incidents in the Gospels not literally true.† The Scripture interweaves into its narrative some things which have never happened and which could not have happened. These things are not facts but mystic economies. Some things also are untrue morally as well as historically.‡ And from these the literal sense leads to all sorts of error in doctrine and practice, to unworthy ideas of God and even to immoral deeds.§ Further still, these literal errors in Scripture have been introduced by God Himself; He has arranged the introduction of these stumbling blocks and impossibilities in history and law in order that we should not believe the obvious meaning of Holy Scripture, but might come to the knowledge of something more Divine.|| Some history, however, he acknowledges is literal and some laws must be obeyed.

* "Comment. on Joh.," x. 2. † "De Principiis," Bk. 4, ch. i., § 16.

‡ "Contra Celsum," iv. 48. § "De Princ.," iv. 1. || Ibid.

None of the Fathers speaks so strongly as Origen, but many recognize the existence of mistakes in Holy Scripture. Jerome criticizes the style and the arguments of sacred writers and points out a mistake in Matt. xxviii. 9. Chrysostom speaks of the condescension of Holy Scripture. He says that God lowers His Revelation because of human weakness from a perfect to an inferior standard. Now, how is it possible that Origen and others can at one time say Scripture is perfect and absolutely free from error, and at another point out numerous errors in it? The answer is because of the allegorical meaning, because of the under or hidden meaning which Scripture is supposed to have in contrast with the obvious and literal meaning. This principle the Fathers got from Philo, as we have already pointed out. By its means all New Testament doctrines could be found in the Old, and all difficulties of the letter of both Testaments could be evaded. This principle Origen systematized and it became universal.

According to Origen, Scripture has a threefold sense.* Just as a man has a body, a soul, and a spirit, so Scripture has a literal, a moral, and a spiritual sense. Holding this theory of interpretation, Origen and others are able to maintain (1) that everything in Holy Scripture comes from God and is perfect; and yet (2) that much in Holy Scripture, *i.e.*, in its body or letter, is unworthy of God and untrue. The three senses have the following uses. The Body was properly for the Old Dispensation, and is useful for the simple. The Soul is for Christians living in the world and those who have advanced

* This is proved by the LXX. of Prov. xxii. ; cf. "De Princ.," iv. 1.

somewhat in the spiritual life. The Spirit is for the perfect,* and for those now or hereafter living in the spiritual world. With his philosophical principles concerning God and the world, the literal and historical meanings are of little value in his eyes. The highest form of Inspiration is a direct word of God—that in which there is least of man.

The influence of Origen on Scripture exegesis in the Church can hardly be exaggerated. Bishop Lightfoot says of him, "That in spite of his very patent faults . . . a very considerable part of what is valuable in subsequent commentaries, whether ancient or modern, is due to him."† The same testimony is borne by many others. Even those who were strongly opposed to Origen in many of his teachings adopt his system of allegorical interpretations. The school of Antioch, however, opposed it, and the Cappadocian Fathers avoided its worst extravagances. Nevertheless, through his influence allegorical interpretation was adopted by the Church. It was further developed by the Schoolmen. The threefold sense became fourfold—literal, moral, anagogical, and allegorical. Holy Scripture was overwhelmed by its interpretations, and the interpretation of its interpretations. The Renaissance bringing back the study of Greek, and the Greek Testament brought men back from fanciful interpretations of Scripture to Scripture itself.

The Reformation inaugurated a new era in the history of the Bible in the Church. Greece rose, as it has been said, from the dead with the New Testament in her hand. The Bible is studied on new

* Cf. 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

† "Ep. to Galatians," p. 227.

principles and with a new eagerness. The comments which had over laid it and smothered it, so to speak, were cast aside.

Long before the beginning of the doctrinal Reformation in the fifteenth century, we find men who revolted against the old studies and interpretations of scholasticism. Men studied the Bible in the original, and tried to interpret it grammatically. This necessarily lead to criticisms of the Vulgate, and of the interpretations of the Fathers and Schoolmen. The great pioneer in the study of Holy Scripture on grammatical and critical principles was Erasmus. He acknowledged the existence of the human element, and therefore of human error in Holy Scripture. He did not altogether break with allegorical interpretations, but he did much to prepare the way for interpreting the Scriptures on sounder principles.*

Now we come to the chief German reformers—Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. Luther repudiates with scorn all allegorical interpretation, and in this particular he is followed by all the Reformers. The literal sense of Scripture alone, he says, is the whole essence of faith and of Christian Theology. Each passage has one clear, definite, and true sense of its own. An interpreter must, as much as possible, avoid allegory, that he may not wander in idle dreams. Origen's allegories are not worth so much dirt. To allegorise is to juggle with Scripture. Luther speaks very freely of Scripture itself, and plainly did not regard it as an infallible authority.

He described the argument St. Paul derived from

* See Farrar, "History of Interpretation," pp. 320-322.

Hagar and Sarah in the Galatians as too weak to hold. There was hay and stubble as well as gold and precious stones in the writings of the prophets. St. James' Epistle is an "Epistle of Straw," and St. Paul's Epistles contained more of a gospel than the three synoptic gospels themselves.

XX

CONCLUSION

MANIFOLD reasons have now been adduced in support of the thesis that the Bible is at once the Word of God and of man. The single yet twofold object throughout has been to establish in the faith those who have been disquieted by reports about the destructive character of critical results, and at the same time to demonstrate the substantial character of the human element on Holy Scripture. A single yet twofold object, we say, because we are convinced that the disquiet cannot be removed until the human element is frankly acknowledged. In the course of our enquiry we have seen in the Bible abundant instances of the workings of human minds and hands, of human methods and human materials ; we have also seen the necessary consequences of all these—errors and imperfections natural to man. We are not called upon to accept the critical results generally. Many of them have indeed, their chief basis in the critics' imagination, and it may be the unbelieving imagination. Nevertheless, we are unable to deny that the human element in Holy Scripture is much greater than former ages have thought. Every age, we may humbly hope, adds

something to our knowledge of truth. The Scribes of every age, in turn, who have been made disciples unto the kingdom of heaven, bring out of their treasure new things, whilst they retain and appreciate the old. The old thing in this case is the Bible's true Divinity, the new (not altogether new) is that the Bible is essentially a book of man.

The important admission which we in consequence are called upon to make is: The Bible has not the quality of inerrancy. It would seem that our reason compels us to acknowledge this fact, however painful it may be to do so. Then comes the all-important decision. Shall we regard this observed fact as destructive of all unbelief in a Divine revelation? Shall we throw our reason over altogether? Or, shall we seek to reconcile the claims of reason with the claims of faith?

There is no doubt what unbelievers generally do; they raise a shout of triumph. The victory is at last won. No one can any longer maintain that the Bible is free from all error. It is a human book, and therefore not Divine.

Simple Christians established in the faith hear the shout and say, What right has any one to criticize the Bible? How false that process of reasoning must be which proves that error of any kind exists in the Word of God. The thing cannot be. The Bible, we know, is the Word of God. Whatever reason says the Bible cannot err.

Other Christians, whose faith is as yet not firmly settled, whose creed, it may be, is inherited rather than their own, become acquainted with certain allegations of error in the Bible. They look for

themselves and find that these allegations are true. The Bible has not the character, it is made plain to them, that they were led to believe it had. Such persons will not give up their reason, so they come under strong temptation to abandon their faith. There are errors in the Bible, say they; we are quite sure of the matter, we can see them for ourselves. We fear, therefore, that we can no longer believe, as our fathers believed, that it is Divine.

In all these three different cases, the reasoning involves the assumption that inspiration is nearly equivalent to verbal dictation, or, at least, that the human element in the Bible is unsubstantial, or, to put it somewhat differently, that the Divine element in Holy Scripture neutralizes or even annihilates the human. In one word, it involves the assumption that one and the same thing cannot be at once truly human and truly Divine.

The object of this book has been to show the falsehood of this assumption. We have given numerous proofs that in the Bible are found, side by side, two sets of opposite qualities, without division and without confusion. The Divine do not absorb the human, nor do the human vitiate the Divine. The human word is the medium of the manifestation of Divine truth. If this be so, it becomes possible to reconcile the postulates of Faith with the conclusions of Reason. Stumbling-blocks are removed from the way of belief, whilst reason is given fair play. We cease to say these things cannot be when we see with our own eyes that they are.

Our acceptance of this conclusion undoubtedly depends on our readiness frankly to acknowledge that

Reason is the gift of God, and, indeed, one of the two chiefest of those good gifts and perfect boons which come down from the Father of Light. Whilst we admit that it has been, to a considerable extent, corrupted and darkened by man's sin, nevertheless it has not been wholly put out. It cannot indeed be reckoned by us to be a vain and deceiving guide ; its processes cannot be stigmatized as unsound when we consider how magnificent are its achievements in other spheres of thought. Sad indeed for us if it were so, for we have nothing which can supply its place. We must take care, with Bishop Butler, not to vilify reason, since it is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself. Man, by his possession of reason joined with faith, is constituted God's greatest work in this world, and is distinguished from all the rest. Each is intended to supplement the other, and each has its own share in making the perfect man. God has joined them together in the unity of the Person of Man. What God has joined together, man should not put asunder.

But if this happy and fruitful union is to be maintained in its integrity, it will be necessary that each should abjure all pretences to infallibility in the conclusions it attains. There is, indeed, no possibility of infallibility in the human sphere, for man cannot, at least in this phase of his existence, be in possession of absolute truth. Some one has said that it is as impossible that a man should be immortal in body as infallible in mind. Every kind of truth, though it comes from God, has to be received into his heart and mind, and these certainly limit and probably

distort and corrupt. This world is a place of shadows, and not of substantial realities; so we possess only ideas of things, shadows of truths, and not the things or truths themselves. We can only see in a mirror and in an enigma, and not face to face.

Nevertheless, a craving for an infallible guide seems to be bound up in the heart of man, at least in matters of religion. Infallibility has been supposed, or, rather, is supposed, by different persons to belong to three different subjects—the Church, the Bible, the Pope. It may be questioned whether any one of the three could make good its claim; but the matter is of little practical importance, because a fourth infallibility—the infallibility of the individual—must be added, if any of the other three is to be effective. Otherwise, infallibility will be beyond his reach. We believe the Church to be a Divine Teacher. The Spirit of God abides within her. She is called the pillar and ground of the truth. She has been promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. To believe what the Church believes seems to myself personally a bounden duty. I would desire to submit myself loyally to every teaching on matters of faith the Church has ever given or shall give. But we follow guides and teachers without being certain that their guidance or teaching is wholly free from error, and the gift of inerrancy or infallibility does not seem to be promised to the Church. It would indeed be difficult, in the face of history, to maintain that that gift has been actually hers. Even Roman Catholic theologians acknowledge that councils can err, and they describe the Divine guidance given to the

Church as assistance—something less than inspiration. But if we admit not only the Church's authority but also her infallibility, there are two questions which we must answer each for himself: What is the Church? and What is her teaching? We may have the best of reasons for our answers, but we cannot be certain that we are right. And consequently the infallibility supposed to be inherent in the Church is lost before it comes to us.

Again, some Christians, on grounds which we think to be insufficient and indeed untenable, maintain the infallibility of the Pope. That doctrine was, in the opinion of the Ultramontanists, to do great things for the Church, and it excited great indignation and opposition amongst all other Christians. Thirty-five years have now passed since the promulgation of Papal infallibility, and we can ask, without undue haste, whether it has had any effect—good or bad—save only the bad effect of placing one more barrier in the way of the union of the divided Body of Christ. It will be remembered that Dr. Newman, though he accepted the dogma as true, was strongly opposed to the policy by which it was made an article of faith. He wrote a letter to the Duke of Norfolk in 1875, in which he pointed out the limitations by which it was surrounded. It was not every utterance of the Pope, but only his *ex cathedra* utterances which were infallible. Some utterances of some Popes had indeed been declared to be heretical. It was only when the Pope spoke as a universal teacher, in the name and with the authority of the Apostles, on a point of faith and morals, and with the intention of binding every member of the

Church to accept and believe his decision, that he spoke *ex cathedrâ*, and so infallibly. These limitations, Dr. Newman observes, contract the range of the Pope's infallibility most materially. They have to be observed most strictly, and, in consequence, there is always room for doubt whether in any particular case they have been properly observed. Instances frequently occur in which the Pope's act does not imply what it has seemed to imply, and questions which seemed to be closed are, after a course of years, re-opened. It would seem that though Romanists may say, *Habemus Papam infallibilem*, he is not really in their possession, for they can never infallibly know whether he has spoken infallibly.

Once more we accept the Bible as bringing to us the Word of God. It is the Divine guide, according to which we should order our life. Applied by the Spirit it will lead us into all truth. We search the Scriptures, relying on the Divine promises, and not in vain. There is, however, no infallibility in our results, because our own individual self is an integral part of our results. We know that the conclusions to which truly good men have come from searching the Scriptures are mistaken. We find, further, that they contain errors and mistakes.

We cannot overestimate the value of God's Word for our advance in spiritual life, but infallibility does not add to its value, because infallibility is a thing beyond our reach. To contend for it is to contend to no profit at the best; it is to ignore obvious facts at the worst. Let us remember what Hooker says, "Whatsoever is spoken of God, or things appertaining to God, otherwise than as the truth is, though

it seems an honour it is an injury. And as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of the deserved commendation ; so we must likewise take great heed, lest in attributing unto Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed." The warning is peculiarly appropriate to the present instance, for are there not many who, having been taught that the Bible being the Word of God can contain no error, have, when errors in it have been made plain to them, forthwith denied that the Bible is the Word of God ?

The conclusion we come to is that infallibility cannot, if found, be used by fallible man ; and further, that it cannot be found anywhere in the human sphere. Probability, not certainty, is our guide. Those who know only in part must be liable to error. All analogy teaches us the same truth. Practical efficiency, not ideal perfection, is the way of God's dealings with man. Thus it would seem idle to contend earnestly for the abstract existence in the Bible of a quality which cannot be found anywhere else in this world of ours, which we cannot discern when present, and which we cannot use when found. And it is not only idle, but harmful, since Faith must abandon her claim to infallibility for her record of revelation, if she is to gain Reason for her ally.

Another condition of alliance between our two Divine gifts is that the limits of each should be defined and respected. It will be readily admitted that two guides have been given by God to men, because

He dwells in two worlds—the world unseen and the world of sight and sense.

It should also be generally admitted that Faith and Reason are supreme each in its own sphere. The histories, both of religion and science, give abundant testimony that this principle has not been recognized. To judge from the letters written in newspapers, the greater number of men, whether believers or unbelievers, do not recognize it still. Until men frankly and fully allow that for either Faith or Reason to go into the other's sphere, and claim to be lord there, is a piece of unwarrantable usurpation, there can be no hope of concord, far less of active alliance, between them. It is not wished that each should abide in his own domain ; but when either goes beyond it, he must go simply as a friend or assessor.

There are some truths which belong wholly or substantially to the spiritual, whilst others belong to the material sphere of human life. For example, science alone can tell us methods of Creation ; Faith alone can discern the First Cause. It may be hoped that some, at least, recognize this division of spheres. Sovereign powers can never be on friendly terms until the limits of their respective domains have been defined. It may be hoped that some such settlement of the spheres of Faith and Reason has been made.

But the larger number of facts in human life are like man himself, neither purely spiritual, nor purely material ; but are both. In these it is difficult to say whether Faith or Reason has the right to the last word. Both, it is certain, have something to say. Here it is important to establish the principle of

co-operation. Now, co-operation between Faith and Reason must be possible in theory, because both are Divine gifts and powers in one being—man. It will become possible in practice when each abandons its suspicions of the other. It is not to be supposed that both are equal in power and range. Faith would seem to have precedence, because she lays hold of God ; Reason, only of God's works. Faith has the promise of eternity ; Reason, only of time. But whatever their respective power, neither can be regarded as always subordinate to the other. They must treat one another with mutual deference. It may be said that when there are two in a single house, one must rule and the other must obey. That is a piece of theory not in accordance with practice, as many a husband and wife testify. If the two are on proper terms each will influence and modify the other. Both will have a share in the final decision, which may be given only by one. The dogmas of Faith will be moulded by Reason, the decisions of Reason not unseldom will be influenced by Faith.

The matters in which Faith and Reason have both a right to speak are often of great practical importance. For example, the Resurrection of our Lord is both a theological truth and a historical fact. And, to come back to our special subject, the Bible, being the human record of the Divine Revelation, comes into the spheres both of Faith and Reason. Faith has to do with the Revelation which it alone can discern ; Reason, with the record which it alone can properly appreciate. We cannot arrive at the Revelation save through the record, so Faith must not disdain, far less refuse, Reason's aid ; but Reason

can only be Faith's handmaid in seeing the God which the Bible reveals.

If we use Reason fairly, we shall accept its aid not only when it in some way confirms our theological opinions, but also when it casts doubt upon some of them. Articles of Faith it cannot touch, for these are purely spiritual ; but it will have something to say about the mass of theological opinion which clusters round them. When God gives us new light, and puts us in possession of new knowledge, we cannot expect that everything will remain as it was before the light and knowledge came. But if we refuse to accept and trust our Reason as an ally in religious matters ; if we regard it as an underworker, to be used or refused at our pleasure ; if it is to be told when it arrives at some conclusion in its own sphere, "The Bible says the contrary, and I believe the Bible," then we must give up all hopes of a rational faith. We must accept the position that a reasonable man cannot believe, and that a believer must not reason. We must accept the false principle of Dualism in Creation—*i.e.* that the material world was not made by God, and is not ruled by Him. We must hold that Reason was not originally God's gift to man, or that it has become so corrupted by sin as to be a deceitful guide even in its own field. Who that has the slightest appreciation of the splendid discoveries of Reason in these latter days can take up this position ?

That quality which is constantly—we might almost say daily—discovering secrets hidden from the ages, and now revealed in these latter days, cannot be essentially corrupt. It is not too much to say that

it is fatal for us to refuse the aid of Reason in the battle against unbelief. We must give her free entry into the Bible field and wait patiently, calmly, and believably for all she can tell us concerning it.

Reason has been specially engaged on the Bible during the last fifty years. From time to time we hear results of her search. It is not necessary, it is not indeed possible, to believe all we hear. She is most certainly not an infallible authority. First results in any investigation are sure to be crude and partial. Investigators are at variance one with another. It is only reasonable to hold our judgment in suspense. We have, moreover, every right to observe the character, the methods, and the motives of the investigators. They may be unbelievers, and begin by assuming tacitly that the supernatural is the impossible. They may show their animus by seizing every opportunity of discrediting Holy Scripture, or by their utter failure to recognize its peculiar merits. We need not trouble ourselves much about such men. Irrational faith is an imperfect guide; but unbelieving reason is sure to lead us astray. Nevertheless, *fas est ab hoste doceri*. If unbelievers demonstrate facts to us we must accept their demonstration.

But it is quite clear that many critics are humble and reverent believers in Revelation. They make no preconceptions as to the impossibility of the miraculous. They use their devout reason on Holy Scripture, and, never losing their faith, arrive at certain conclusions. These conclusions have no pretence to infallibility, but arrived at in this way they claim our respect and attention. Their general, as distinct from their particular conclusions cannot, at

least, be rejected peremptorily. That conclusion is : the Bible is a book like every other. It has all human qualities and all the defects of those qualities. This is the crucial point, and here the paths of irrational faith, rational faith, and unbelief divide.

But still we ask, Can anything have at once the perfections of God and the imperfections of man ? Can anything be not only made out of Divine and human elements, but remain perfectly human and Divine ? Let us remember that the problem of Inspiration involves the solution of that most difficult of all problems—the co-existence of the Finite and the Infinite. How can God be infinite, and yet something which is not God also exist ? How, further, can that finite something which is not God have a will of its own—thwart seemingly by its incapacity God's purpose—even more be rebellious, and in a sense successfully rebellious, against the Infinite God ? We must be content to leave such problems unsolved. We should be ready to allow that the problem may be so large because we are so small. We must be content to know God is, and we are by His will. And then the Incarnation—the key to all mysteries—comes to our aid and teaches us that, however immense the *a priori* impossibility may seem to us, Deity and perfect Deity, humanity and perfect humanity—Deity co-essential with the Deity of the Father—humanity co-essential with our own—actually co-existed and co-exist in the closest of all unities—the unity of one Person, one Lord Jesus Christ. It would have been easier for us to comprehend this, or, at any rate, many have thought so, if our Lord's Deity had been of an inferior, and His humanity of

a superior kind ; if, that is to say, the gulf between God and man had been filled up somewhat, and our Lord Jesus Christ had wanted some of the perfections of God, and had not taken upon Him all the imperfections of man. The case is otherwise. He has all Divine and all human attributes. And we know, further, that perfect Deity and perfect humanity co-operate, and that in the greatest of all Divine works—the work of the New Creation, the making of the higher man. That work was begun on earth, and no part of it was accomplished save through the medium of that weakened human nature—weakened though not tainted by sin—which our Redeemer took. That work is being continued on earth, and the instruments which God uses are men, who are not only weak, but actually sinful. That work is being consummated in heaven, and the ascended Lord works nothing wherein His human nature, now glorified—that human nature which is to be ours—is absent or idle. Thus it has been made abundantly clear that Divine Nature is such, and human nature, even fallen human nature, is such, that God and man can fully co-operate together.

We apply this great truth to formulate and explain the doctrine of Inspiration. We discern in the written word, only less clearly than in the Incarnate Word, the properties of God and the properties of man. Our experience in regard to the Incarnation teaches us not to explain away either set of facts presented to us in the Record of Revelation—to make no confusion between its two substances, Divine and human ; to accept to the fullest extent, and in their fullest consequences as well, those facts which

manifest to us the ignorance and weakness of man as well as those which manifest the wisdom and power of God. Believing in one Lord Jesus Christ, Word of God and Son of man, it becomes not impossible for us to believe that God and man have co-operated in the making of the Bible. We feel ourselves in no way compelled to admit that it is not the Word of God, when it is proved to us by unmistakable signs that it is the word of man.

THE END

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